

THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER 1, 1869.

ROLAND YORKE.

A SEQUEL TO "THE CHANNINGS."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE," "GEORGE CANTERBURY'S WILL," &c.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GERALD YORKE AT A SHOOTING-PARTY.

IT was a pretty place ; its name, Sunny Mead, an appropriate one. For the bright sun (not far yet above the horizon) of the clear and cold December day, shone on it cheerily : on the walls of the dwelling-house—on the green grass of the spreading lawn, with its groups of flowering laurestina and encompassing trees, that in summer cast a grateful shade. The house was small, but compact ; the prospect from the windows, with its expanse of wood and hill and dale, a charming one. At its best it was a simple, unpretending place, but as pleasant a homestead for moderate desires as could be found in the county of Surrey.

In a snug room, its fire blazing in the grate, its snowy breakfast cloth, laden with china and silver, drawn near the large window that looked upon the lawn, sat the owner, Sir Vincent Yorke, and his cousin Gerald. As soon as breakfast should be over, they were going out shooting ; but the baronet was by no means one who liked to disturb his morning's comfort by starting at dawn : shooting, as well as everything else in life, he preferred to take easily. Gerald had arrived the previous night. It was the first time Gerald had seen Sunny Mead ; and the very unpretending rank it took amidst baronets' dwelling-places, surprised him. Sir Vincent's marriage was fixed for the following month, January ; and he gratified Gerald much by saying that he thought of asking him to be groomsman.

"Aw!—very happy—immensely so," responded Gerald with his most fashionable drawl, that so grated on a true and honest ear.

"Sunny Mead has this advantage ; one can come to it and be quiet," observed Sir Vincent. "There's not room for more than three or four

servants in it. My father used to call it the homestead : that's just what it is, and it doesn't pretend to be aught else. More coffee ? Try that partridge-pie. Have you seen Roland lately ? "

The cynical expression of disparagement that pervaded Gerald's face at the question, made Sir Vincent smile.

" Aw—I say, don't you spoil my breakfast by bringing up *him*," spoke Gerald. " The best thing he can do is to go out to Port Natal again. A capital pie ! "

" This devilled turkey's good, too. You'll try it presently ? " spoke the baronet. " How is Hamish Channing ? "

Gerald's skin turned of a dark hue. Was Sir Vincent purposely annoying him ? Catching up his coffee-cup to take a long draught, he did not answer.

" I never saw so fine a fellow in all my life," resumed Sir Vincent. " Never was so taken with a face at first sight as with his. William Yorke was staying there at the time of my father's funeral, and I went next day to call. That's how I saw Channing. He promised to come and see me ; but somebody told me the other day he was ill."

" Aw—yes," drawled Gerald. " Seedy, I believe."

" What's the matter with him ? "

" Temper," said Gerald. " Wrote a book, and had some bad reviews upon it, and it put him out, I hear."

" But it was a first-rate book, Gerald ; I read it, and the reviews were all wrong ; suppose some contemptible raven of envy scrawled them. The book's working its way upwards as fast as it can now."

" Who says so ? " cried Gerald.

" I do. I had the information from a reliable source. By-the-way, is there anything in that story of Roland's—that he is engaged to Channing's sister ? Or is it fancy ? "

" I do wish you'd let the fellow's name be ; he's not so very good to talk of," retorted Gerald, in a rage.

But Roland was not so easily put out of the conversation. As luck had it, when the servant brought Sir Vincent's letters in, there was one from Roland amidst them. Vincent laughed outright as he read it :—

" DEAR VINCENT,

" I happened to overhear old Greatorex say yesterday that Sir Vincent Yorke wanted a working bailiff for the land at Sunny Mead. I ! wish ! to ! offer ! myself ! for ! the ! situation ! There ! I put it strong that you may not mistake. Of course, I am a relative, which I can't help being ; and a working bailiff is but a kind of an upper servant. But I'll be very glad of the place if you'll give it me, and will do my duty in it as far as I can, putting my best shoulder to the wheel ; and I'll never presume upon our being cousins to go into your house unin-

vited, or put myself in your way : and my wife would not call on Lady Yorke if she did not wish it. I'll be the bailiff—you the master.

"I don't tell you I am a first hand at farming ; but, if perseverance and sticking to work can teach, I shall soon learn it. I picked up some experience at Port Natal ; and had to drive waggons and other animals. I'm great in pigs. The droves I had to manage of the grunting, obstinate wretches out there taught me enough of them. Of course, I know all about hay-making ; and I'd used to be one of the company at old Pierce's harvest-homes, on his farm near Helstonleigh. I don't suppose you'd want me to thresh the wheat myself ; but I'm strong to do it, and would not mind. I would be always up before dawn in spring to see to the young lambs ; and I'd soon acquire the ins and outs of manuring and draining. Do try me, Vincent ! I'll put my shoulder to the wheel in earnest for you. There'd be one advantage in taking me—that I should be honest and true to your interests. Whereas some bailiffs like to serve themselves better than their masters.

"As to wages, I'd leave that to you. You'd not give less than a hundred a year to begin with ; and at the twelvemonth's end, when I had made myself qualified, you might make it two. Perhaps you'd give the two hundred at once. I don't wish to presume because I am a relative ; and if the two hundred would be too much at first (for, to tell the truth, I don't know how bailiffs' pay runs), please excuse my having named it. I expect there are lots of pretty cottages to be hired down there ; may be there's one on the estate appropriated to the bailiff. I may as well mention that I am a first-rate horseman, and could gallop about like a fire-engine ; having nearly lost my life more times than one, learning to ride the wild cattle when up the country at Port Natal.

"I think that's all I have to say. Only try me ! If you do, you will find how willing I am. Besides being strong, I am naturally active, with plenty of energy : the land should not go to ruin for the want of being looked after. My object in life now is to get a certainty that will bring me in something tolerably good to begin, and go on to three hundred a year, or more ; for I should not like Annabel to take pupils always. I don't know whether a bailiff ever gets as much.

"Bede Greatorex can give you a good character of me for steadiness and industry. And if I have stuck to this work, I should do better by yours ; for writing I hate, and knocking about a farm I'd like better than anything.

"You'll let me have an answer as soon as convenient. If you take me I shall have to order leggings and other suitable toggery from Carrick's tailor ; and he might be getting on with the things.

"Wishing you a merry Christmas, which will soon be here (don't I recollect one of mine at Port Natal, when I had nothing for dinner and the same for supper), I remain, dear Vincent, yours truly,

"Sir Vincent Yorke.

ROLAND YORKE."

To watch the curl of Gerald's lips, the angry sarcasm of his face as he perused this document, which the baronet handed to him with a laugh, was amusing. It might have made a model of scorn for a painter's easel. Dropping the letter from his fingers, as if there were contamination in its very touch, he flicked it across the table.

"You'll send it back to him in a blank envelope, won't you?"

"No; why should I?" returned Sir Vincent, who was good-natured in the main, easy on the whole. "I'll answer him when I've time. Do you know, Gerald, I think you rather disparage Roland."

Gerald opened his astonished eyes. "Disparage him! How can he be disparaged?—he is just as low as he can be. An awful blot, and nothing else, on the family escutcheon."

"The family don't seem to be troubled much by him—saving me. He appears to regard me as a sheet-anchor—who can provide for the world, himself included. I rather like the young fellow; he is so genuine."

"Don't call him young," reproved Gerald; "he'll be twenty-nine next May."

"And in mind and manners he is nineteen!"

"He talks of pigs—see what he has brought *his* to," exclaimed Gerald, somewhat forgetting his fashion. "The—aw—low kind of work he condescends to do—the mean way he is not ashamed to confess he lives in! Every bit of family pride has gone out of him, and given place to vulgar instincts."

"As Roland has tumbled into the mire, better for him to be honest and work," returned Sir Vincent, mincing with his dry toast and one poached egg, for he was delicate in appetite. "What else could he do? Of course there's the credit system and periodical white-washings, but I should not care to go in for that kind of thing myself."

"Are you in want of a bailiff?" growled Gerald, wondering whether the last remarks were meant to be personal.

"Greatorex has engaged one for me. How are you getting on yourself, Gerald?"

"Not—aw—at all. I'm awfully hard up."

"You always are, Ger, according to your story," was the baronet's remark, laughing slightly.

And somehow the laugh sounded in Gerald's ear as a hard laugh—as one that boded no good results to the petition he meant to prefer before his departure—that Sir Vincent would accommodate him with a loan.

"He's close-fisted as a miser," was Gerald's mental comment. "His father all over again. Neither of them would part with a shilling save for self-gratification: and both could spend enough on *that*. I'll ask him for a hundred, point-blank, before I leave; more, if I can feel my way to do it. Fortune is shamefully unequal in this life. There's Vin

with his baronetcy, and his nice little place here and every comfort in it, and his town-house, and his clear four thousand a year, and no end of odds and ends of money besides, nest-eggs of various shapes and sizes, and his future wife a seventy thousand pounder in her own right ; and here's myself by his side, a better man than he any day, with not a coin of my own in the whole world, nor likely to drop into one by inheritance, and afraid to venture about London for fear of being nabbed ! Curse the whole thing ! He is shabby in trifles too. To give me a miserable two days' invitation. Two days ! I'll remain twenty if I can."

" You don't eat, Gerald."

" I've made a famous breakfast, thank you. Do you spend Christmas down here, Vincent ? "

" Not I. The day after to-morrow, when you leave me, I start for Paris."

" For Paris ! " echoed Gerald, his mouth falling at the sudden failure of his pleasant scheme.

" Miss Trehern and her father are there. We shall remain for the *jour de l'an*, see the bonbon shops, and all that, and then come back again."

" And I hope the bonbon shops will choke him ! " thought kindly Gerald.

Sir Vincent Yorke did not himself go in for keepers and dogs. There was little game on his land, and he was too effeminate to be much of a sportsman. He owned two guns, and that comprised the whole of his shooting paraphernalia. Breakfast over, he had his guns brought, and desired Gerald to take his choice.

Now the handling and understanding of guns did not rank amidst Gerald Yorke's accomplishments. Brought up in the cathedral town, only away from it on occasions at Dr. Yorke's living (and that happened to be in a town also), the young Yorkes were not made familiar with out-door sports. Dr. Yorke had never followed them himself, and saw no necessity for training his sons to them. Even riding they were not very familiar with. Roland's letter has just informed Sir Vincent that he had nearly lost his life *learning to ride* the wild horses when up the country at Port Natal. Probably he had learnt also to understand something about guns : we may be very sure of one thing, that if he did not understand them, he would have voluntarily avowed it. Not so Gerald. Gerald, made up of artificialisms—for nothing seemed real about him but his ill-temper—touched the guns here, and fingered the guns there, and critically examined them everywhere, as if he were the greatest connoisseur alive, and had invented a breech-loader himself ; and finally said he would take *this* one.

So they went out, each with his gun, and a favourite dog of the baronet's, Spot, and joined a neighbour's shooting-party, as had been ar-

ranged. Colonel Clutton's land joined Sir Vincent's; he was a keen lover of sport, always making up parties for it, and if Sir Vincent went out at all, it was sure to be with Colonel Clutton.

"To-day and to-morrow will be my last turn out this season," observed the baronet, as they walked along. "Not sorry for it. One gets a large amount of fatigue: don't think the slaughter compensates for that."

Reaching the meeting-place, they found a party of some three or four gentlemen and two keepers. Gerald was introduced to Colonel Clutton, an elderly man with snow-white hair. The sport set in. It was late in the season, and the birds were getting scarce or wary, but a tolerably fair number fell.

"The gentleman don't seem to handle his gun gainly, sir, as if he'd played with one as a babbie," observed one of the keepers, confidentially in Sir Vincent's ear.

He alluded to Gerald Yorke. Sir Vincent turned and looked. Though not much addicted to shooting, he was thoroughly conversant with it, and what he saw as he watched Gerald a little surprised him.

"I say, Gerald Yorke, you must take care," he called out. "Did you never handle a gun before?"

The suggestion offended Gerald: the question nettled him. His face grew dark.

"What do you mean, Sir Vincent?" was his angry answer. He would have liked to affirm his great knowledge of shooting, but his chief practice had been with a pop-gun at school.

Sir Vincent laughed a little. "Don't do any mischief, that's all." It might have been that the public caution caused Gerald to be more careless, just to prove his proficiency; it might have been that it tended to flurry him. Certainly he would not have caused harm wilfully; but nevertheless it took place.

Not ten minutes after Sir Vincent had spoken, he was crossing a narrow strip of open ground towards a copse. Gerald, leaping through a gap in the hedge not far behind, carrying his gun (like a senseless man) on full cock, contrived, in some inextricable manner, to discharge it. Whether his elbows caught in the leafless branches, or the trigger caught, or what it was, Gerald Yorke never knew, and never will know to his dying day. The charge went off; there was a cry, accompanied by shouts of warning, somebody on the ground in front, and the rest running to surround the fallen man.

"You have no right to come out, sir, unless you can handle a gun properly!" spoke Colonel Clutton to Gerald, in the moment's confusion. "I have been watching your awkwardness all the morning."

Gerald looked pale with fear, dark with anger. He made no reply whatever: only pressed forward to see who was down, the men in their velveteen coats and leggings looking much alike. Sir Vincent Yorke.

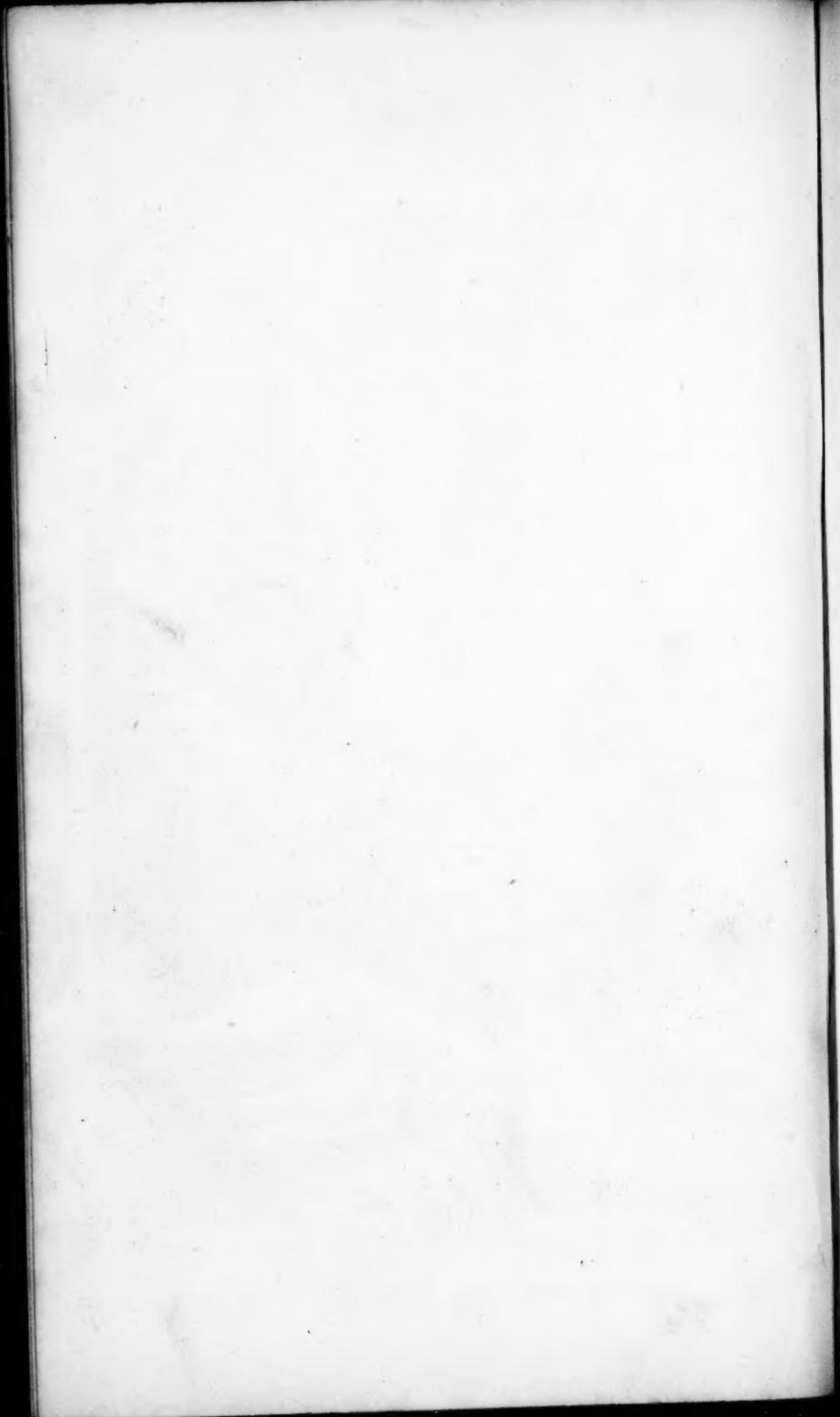
"It's not much, I think," said the baronet, good-naturedly, as he



Sir Vincent Yorke meets with an accident.

E. EVANS, sc.

T. GRAY, del.



looked up at Gerald. "But I say, though—you should have candidly answered me that you were not in the habit of shooting, when I sent you the invitation."

No, it was not much. A few shots had entered the calf of the left leg. They got out pocket-handkerchiefs, and tied them tightly round to stop the haemorrhage. The dog, Spot, laid his head close to his master's face, and whined pitifully.

"What sense them dumb animals have!—a'most human!" remarked the keeper.

"This will stop my Paris trip," observed Sir Vincent, as they were conveying him home.

"Better that was stopped than your wedding," replied Colonel Clutton, with a jesting smile. "You keep yourself quiet, now; that you may be well for *that*. Don't talk."

Sir Vincent acquiesced readily. At the best of times he was sensitive to pain, and somewhat of a coward in regard to his own health. At home he was met by a skilful surgeon. The shots were extracted, and Sir Vincent was made comfortable in bed. Gerald Yorke waylaid the doctor afterwards.

"Is it serious? Will he do well? Sir Vincent is my cousin."

"Oh—Mr. Yorke: the gentleman whose gun unfortunately caused the mishap," was the answering remark. "Of course these accidents are always serious, more or less. This one might have been far worse than it is."

"He will do well?"

"Quite well. At least, I hope so. I see nothing to hinder it. Sir Vincent will be a tractable patient, you see; and a good deal lies in that."

"There's no danger, then?"

"Oh no: no danger."

Gerald, relieved on the score of apprehension of consequences, had the grace to express his regret and sorrow to the baronet. Sir Vincent begged him to think no more about it: only recommended him not to go out with a party in future, until he had had some practice. Gerald, untrue to the end, said he was a little *out of* practice; should soon get into it again. Sir Vincent made quite light of the hurt; it was nothing to speak of, the doctor had said; would not delay his marriage, or anything. But he did not ask Gerald to remain: and that gentleman, in spite of his hints, and his final offer to stay, found he was expected to go. Sir Vincent expressed his acknowledgments, but said he wished for perfect quiet.

So, on the day following the accident, Gerald Yorke returned to town; which was a day sooner than, even at the worst, he had bargained for; and arrived in a temper. Taking one untoward disappointment with another, Gerald's mood could not be expected to be heavenly. He had fully intended to come away with his pockets lined—if by dint

of persuasion Sir Vincent could be seduced into doing it. As it was, Gerald had not broached the subject. Sir Vincent was to be kept entirely quiet; and Gerald, with all his native assurance, could not ask a man for money, whom he had just shot.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN CUSTODY.

PACING his carpet, in the worst state of perturbation possible, was the Reverend Mr. Ollivera. He had so paced it all the morning. Neglecting his ordinary duties, staying indoors when he ought to have been out, unable to eat or to rest, he and his mind were alike in a state of most distressing indecision. The whole of the night had he tossed and turned, and rose up again and again to walk his room, struggling with his conscience. For years past, he had, so to say, *lived* on the anticipation of this hour: when the memory of his dear brother should be cleared of its foul stain, and the true criminal brought to light. And, now that it had come, he was hesitating whether or not to take advantage of it: whether to let the stain remain, and the criminal escape.

Torn to pieces with doubt and pain was he. Unable to see *where* his duty lay, more than once, with lifted hands and eyes and heart, a cry to heaven to direct him broke from his lips. Passages of scripture, bearing both ways, crowded on his mind, to puzzle him the more; but there was one great lesson he could not ignore—the loving, merciful teaching of Jesus Christ.

About one o'clock, when the remembrance of the miserable grave, and of him who had been so miserably put into it, lay very strong upon him, Alletha Rye came into the room with some white cravats of the parson's in her hand. She was neat and nice as usual, wearing a soft merino with white-worked cuffs and collars, her fair hair smooth and abundant.

"I have done the best I could with them, sir: cut off the edges and hemmed them afresh," she said. "After that I passed the iron over them, and they look just as if fresh got up."

"Thank you," murmured Mr. Ollivera, the colour flushing in his face, and speaking in a confused kind of manner, like a man overtaken in a crime.

"Great heaven, can I go on with it?" he exclaimed, as she went out, leaving the neckerchiefs on the table. "Is it possible to believe that she *did* it?—with her calm good face, with her clear honest eye?" he continued in an agony of distress. "Oh, for guidance!—that I may be shown what my course ought to be!"

As a personal matter, to give Alletha Rye into custody would cause him grievous pain. She had lived under the same roof with him, show-

ing him voluntarily a hundred little courtesies and kindnesses. These white cravats of his, just put to rights, had been undertaken in pure goodwill.

How very much of our terrible seasons of distress might be spared to us, if we could but see a little further than the present moment; than the atmosphere immediately around! Henry William Ollivera might have been saved his: had he but known that while he was doubting, another was acting. Mr. Greatorex had taken it into his own hands, and the house's trouble was, even then, at the very door. In after-life, Henry Ollivera never ceased to be thankful that it was not himself who brought it.

A commotion below. Mr. Roland Yorke had entered, and was calling out to the house to bring his dinner. It was taken to him in the shape of some slices of roast mutton and potatoes. When Mrs. Jones had a joint herself, Roland was served from it. That she was no gainer by the bargain, Mrs. Jones was conscious of; the small sum she allowed herself in repayment out of the weekly sovereign, debarred it: but Roland was favoured for the sake of old times.

Close almost upon that, there came a rather quiet double-knock at the street-door, which Miss Rye went to answer. Roland thought he recognised a voice, and ran out, his mouth full of mutton.

"Why, it's never you, old Butterby? What brings you in London again?"

Whatever brought Mr. Butterby to London, something curious appeared to have brought him to Mrs. Jones's. A policeman had followed him in, and was shutting the street-door, with a manner quite at home. There escaped a faint cry from Alletha, and her face turned white as ashes. Roland stared from one to the other.

"What on earth's the matter?" demanded he.

"I'd like to speak to you in private for a minute, Miss Rye," said Mr. Butterby, in a low civil tone. "Tomkins, you wait there."

She went higher up the passage and looked round something like a stag at bay. There was no unoccupied room to take him to. Mr. Brown's frugal dinner-tray (luncheon, as he called it) was in his, awaiting his entrance. That the terrible man of law with his officer had come to arrest *him* Alletha never doubted. A hundred wild ideas of telegraphing him some impossible warning, *not* to enter, went teeming through her brain. Tomkins stood on the entrance mat; Roland Yorke, with his accustomed curiosity, put his back against his parlour door-post to watch proceedings.

"Miss Rye, I'd not have done this of my own accord, leastways not so soon, but it has been forced upon me," whispered Mr. Butterby. "I've got to ask you to go with me."

"To ask me?" she tremblingly said, while he was showing her a paper: probably the warrant.

"Are you so much surprised: after that there avowal you made to me last night? If I'd gone and told a police-officer that I had killed somebody, it would not astonish me to be took."

Her face fell. The pallor of her cheeks was coloured by a faint crimson; her eyes flashed with a condemning light.

"I told you in confidence, as one friend might speak to another; in defence of him who was not there to defend himself," she panted. "How could I suppose you would hasten treacherously to use it against me?"

"Ah," said Mr. Butterby, "in things of that sort us law defenders is just the wrong sort to make confidants of. But now, look here, Miss Rye: I didn't go and abuse that confidence, and though it is me that has put the wheels of the law in motion, it is done in obedience to orders, which I had no power to stop. I'm sorry to have to do it: and I've come down with the warrant myself out of respect to you, that things might be accomplished as genteel as might be."

"Now then, Alletha! Do you know that your dinner's getting cold? What on earth are you stopping there for? Who is it?"

The interruption was from Mrs. Jones, called out through the nearly closed door of her parlour. Alletha, making no response, looked fit to die.

"Have you come to arrest me?" she whispered.

"Well, it's about it, Miss Rye. Apprehend, that is. We'll get a cab and you'll go in it with my friend there, all snug and quiet. I'm vexed that young Yorke should just be at home. Tried to get here half an hour earlier, but—"

Mrs. Jones's door was pulled open with a jerk. To describe the aggravated astonishment on her face when she saw the state of affairs, would be a work of skill. Alletha with a countenance of ghastly fear; Mr. Butterby whispering to her; the policeman on the door-mat; Roland Yorke looking leisurely on.

"Well, I'm sure!" exclaimed Mrs. Jones. "What may be the meaning of this?"

There could be no evasion now. Had Alletha in her secret heart hoped to keep it from her tart, condemning, and strong-minded sister, the possibility was over. She went down the few steps that led to the room, and entered it; Mr. Butterby close behind her. The latter was shutting the door, when Roland Yorke walked in, taking French leave. Which of the two stared the most, Mrs. Jones or Roland, and which of the two felt inclined to abuse Mr. Butterby the most, when his errand became known, remains a question to this day. Roland's championship was hot.

"You know you always do take the wrong people, Butterby!"

"Now, young Mr. Yorke, just you concern yourself with your own business, and leave other folks's alone," was the detective's answering

reprimand. "I don't see what call you have to be in this here room at all."

In all the phases of the affair, with its attendant conjectures and suspicions, from the first moment that she saw John Ollivera lying dead in her house, the possibility of Alletha's being cognisant of its cause, much less connected with it, had never once entered the head of Mrs. Jones. She stared from one to the other in simple wonder.

"What is it you charge my sister with, Butterby?—the death of Counsellor Ollivera?"

"Well, yes; that's it," he answered.

"And how dare you do it?"

"Now, look you here, Mrs. Jones," said Butterby, in a tone of reason, putting his hand calmly on her wrist, "I've told Miss Rye, and I tell you, that these proceedings are instituted by the law, not by me; if I had not come to carry them out, another would, who might have done it in a rougher manner. A woman of your sense ought to see the matter in its right light. I don't say she's guilty, and I hope she'll be able to prove that she's not; but I can tell you this much, Mrs. Jones, there's them that have had their suspicions turned upon her from the first."

Being a woman of sense, as Mr. Butterby delicately insinuated, Mrs. Jones began to feel a trifle staggered. Not at his words: they had little power over *her* mind, but at Alletha's appearance. Leaning against the wall there, white, faint, silent, she looked like one guilty, rather than innocent. And it suddenly struck Mrs. Jones that she did not attempt a syllable in her own defence.

"Why don't you speak out, girl?" she demanded in her tartest tone. "You can, I suppose?"

But the commotion had begun to cause attention in the quiet house. Not so much from its noise, as by that subtle instinct that makes itself heard, we cannot tell how; and Mr. Ollivera came in.

"Who has done this?" he briefly asked of the detective.

"Mr. Greatorex, sir."

"The next thing they'll do may be to take me up on the charge," spoke Mrs. Jones with acrimony. "What on earth put this into their miserable heads? You don't suspect her, I hope, Mr. Ollivera!"

He only looked at Mrs. Jones in silence by way of answer: a grave meaning in his sad face. It spoke volumes; and Mrs. Jones, albeit not one to give way to emotion, or any other kind of weakness, felt as if a jug of cold water were being poured down her back. Straightforward always, she put the question to him with naked plainness.

"Do you suspect her?"

"I have suspected her," came the low tones of Mr. Ollivera, in answer. "Believe me, Mrs. Jones, whatever may be the final result of this, I grieve for it bitterly."

"I say, why can't you speak up, and say you did not do it?" stamped Roland, in his championship. "Don't be frightened out of your senses by Butterby. He never pitches upon the right person; Mrs. J. remembers *that*."

"As this here talking won't do any good—and I'm sure if it would I'd let it go on a bit—suppose we make a move," interposed Butterby. "If you'd like to put up a few things to take with you, Miss Rye, do so. You'll have to go to Helstonleigh."

"Oh, law!" cried Roland. "I say, Butterby, it's a mistake, I know. Let her go. Come! you shall have all my dinner."

"Don't stand there like a statue, as if you were moon-struck," said Mrs. Jones, seizing her sister to administer a slight shaking. "Tell them you are innocent, girl, if you can; and let Butterby go about his business."

And in response, Alletha neither spoke nor moved.

But at this moment another actor appeared upon the scene. A knock at the front door was politely answered at once by the policeman, glad, no doubt, to have something to do, and Mr. Brown entered, arriving at home for his mid-day meal. Roland dashed into the passage.

"I say, Brown, here *is* a stunning shame. Old Butterby's come to take up Alletha Rye."

"Take her up for what?" Mr. Brown calmly asked.

"For the killing and slaying of Counsellor Ollivera, he says. But in these things he never was anything but a calf."

Mr. Brown turned into his room, put down his hat and a small paper parcel, and went on to the scene. Before he could say a word, Alletha Rye burst forth like one demented.

"Don't come here, Mr. Brown. We've nothing to do with strangers. I can't have all the world looking at me."

Mr. Brown took a quiet survey of matters with perfect self-possession, and then drew Mr. Butterby towards his room, just as though he had possessed the authority of Scotland Yard. Mrs. Jones was left alone with her sister, and caught hold of her two hands.

"Now then! What is the English of this? Had you ought to with the death of Mr. Ollivera?"

"Never," said Alletha; "I would not have hurt a hair of his head."

Mrs. Jones, at the answer, hardly knew whether to slap the young woman's face or to shriek at her. All this disgrace brought upon her house, and Alletha to submit to it in unrefuting tameness. As a preliminary, she began a torrent of words.

"Hush!" said Alletha. "They think me guilty, and at present they must be let think it. I cannot help myself: if Butterby conveys me to Helstonleigh, he must do it."

Mrs. Jones was nearly staggered out of her passion. The cold water went trickling down again. Not at once could she answer.

"Lord help the wench for a fool! Don't you know that, if you are conveyed to Helstonleigh, it would be to take your trial at the next assizes? Would you face *that*?"

"I cannot tell," wailed Alletha, putting up her thin hand to her troubled face, "I must have time to think."

But we must follow Mr. Brown. As he passed into his room and closed the door, he took a tolerably long look into Butterby's eyes: possibly hoping to discover whether that astute officer knew him for Godfrey Pitman. He obtained no result. Had Mr. Butterby been a born natural he could not have looked more charmingly innocent. That he chose to indulge this demand for an interview for purposes of his own, those who knew him could not doubt. They stood together before the fireless hearth; however cold the weather might be, Mr. Brown's fire went out after breakfast and was not re-lighted until night.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Butterby. With so much confusion in there"—nodding in the direction of Mrs. Jones's parlour—"I am not sure that I fully understood. Is it true that you are about to take Miss Rye into custody on suspicion of having caused the death of John Ollivera?"

"I have took her," was the short answer. "It is nothing to you, I suppose."

"It is this much to me: that I happen to be in a position to testify that she did not do it."

"Oh, you think so, do you," said Butterby, in a civil but slightly mocking tone. "I've knowed ten men at least swear to one man's innocence of a crime, and him guilty all the while. Don't say it was perjury: appearances is deceptive and human nature's soft."

"I affirm to you, in the hearing of heaven, that Alletha Rye was innocent of the death of John Ollivera," said Mr. Brown in a solemn tone that might have carried conviction to even a less experienced ear. "She had nothing whatever to do with it. Until the following morning, when she found him, she was as ignorant as you that he was dead."

"Then why don't she speak up and say so? Not that it could make any difference at the present stage of affairs."

"Will you let me ask who it is that has had her apprehended? Mr. Bede Greatorex?"

"Bede Greatorex has had nothing to do with it. 'Twas his father."

"Well now, I have a favour to ask you, Mr. Butterby," continued the other after a pause. "The good name of a young woman is a great deal easier lost than regained, as no one can tell better than yourself. It will be an awful thing if Alletha Rye, being innocent—as I swear to you she is—should be accused of this dreadful crime before the world.

You have known her a long while: will you not stretch a point to save her?"

"That might depend a good deal upon what the point was," replied Mr. Butterby.

"A very simple one. Only this—that you would stay proceedings until I have had time to see Bede Greatorex. Let her remain here, in custody of course—for I am not so foolish as to suppose you could release her—but don't molest her; don't take her away. In fact, *treat her as though* you knew she were wrongfully accused. You may be obliged to me for this later, Mr. Butterby—I won't say in the interests of humanity, but of justice."

Various thoughts and experiences of the past, as connected with Bede Greatorex, came crowding into the mind of Butterby. His lips parted with a smile, but it was not a favourable one.

"I think that Bede Greatorex could join with me in satisfying you that it was not Miss Rye," urged the petitioner. "I am almost sure he can do this if he will."

"Which is as much as to say that both he and you have got your suspicions turned on some other quarter?" rejoined Butterby. "Who was it?"

That Mr. Brown's cheeks took a darker tinge at the direct query was plain to be seen. He made no answer.

"Come! Who did that thing? *You* know."

"If I do not know—and I am unable to tell you that I do, Mr. Butterby—I can yet make a shrewd guess at it."

"And Bede Greatorex too, you say?"

"I fancy he can."

Looking into each other's eyes, those two deep men, there ensued a silence. "If it wasn't this woman," whispered Butterby, "perhaps it was another."

The clerk opened his lips to speak in hasty impulse: but he closed them again, still looking hard at the officer.

"Whether it was or not, the woman was not Alletha Rye."

"Then," said Mr. Butterby, following out his own private thoughts, and giving the table an emphatic slap, which caused the frugal luncheon-tray to jingle, "this thing will never be brought to trial."

"I don't much think it will," was the significant answer. "But you will consent to what I ask? I won't be away long. A quarter of an hour will suffice for my interview with Bede Greatorex."

Weighing chances and possibilities, as it lay in the business of Mr. Butterby to do; knowing who the man before him was, with the suspicion attaching to him, he thought it might be as well to keep him under view. There was no apparent intention to escape; the clerk seemed honest as the day in this present purpose, and strangely earnest; but Mr. Butterby had learnt to trust nobody.

"I'll go with you," said he. "Tomkins will keep matters safe here. Come on. Hang me if this case ever had its fellow: it turns one about with its little finger."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BETWEEN BEDE AND HIS CLERK.

THEY stood near each other, Bede Greatorex and his managing clerk, while Mr. Butterby paced the passage outside.

When interrupted, Bede had his elbow on the mantel-piece, his brow bent on his thin fingers. A good blazing fire here, the coal crackling and sparkling cheerily. Bede dropped his elbow.

"What is it, Mr. Brown?" he rather languidly asked.

Mr. Brown, closing the door, went straight up and said what it was: Alletha Rye had been apprehended. But he looked anywhere, as he spoke, rather than into the face of his master. A face that grew suddenly white and cold: and Mr. Brown, in his delicacy of mind, would not appear to see it.

"What a cursed meddler that Butterby is!" exclaimed Bede.

"I fancy he had no option in this, sir; that it was not left to his choice."

"Who did it then?"

"Mr. Greatorex. This must be remedied at once, sir."

By the authoritative manner in which he spoke, it might have been thought that Bede Greatorex was the servant, Brown the master. Bede put his elbow on the shelf again, and pushed back his hair in unmistakable agitation. It was growing thin now, the once luxuriant crop; and silver threads were interwoven with the black ones.

"She must be saved," repeated Mr. Brown.

"I suppose so. Who is to do it?"

"I must, sir. If no one else does."

Bede raised his eyes to glance at his clerk; but it was not a full free glance, and they were instantly dropped again.

"You are the Godfrey Pitman, they tell me, who was in the house at the time."

"Yes, I am. But have you not known it all along, Mr. Bede Greatorex?"

"All along from when?"

Mr. Brown hesitated. "From the time that I came here as clerk."

"No; certainly I have not."

"There were moments, sir, when I fancied it."

A long silence. Even now, whatever secret or association there might be between these two men, neither was at ease with the other. Bede especially seemed to shrink from further explanation.

"I have known but for a short while of your identity with Godfrey

Pitman," he resumed. "And with George Winter. I have been waiting my own time to confer with you upon the subject. We have been very busy."

We have been very busy! If Bede put that forth as an excuse, it did not serve him: for his hearer knew it was not the true one. He simply answered that they *had* been very busy. Not by so much as a look or a syllable would George Winter—let us at last give him his true name—add to the terrible pain he knew his master must be suffering.

"About Miss Rye, sir? She must be extricated from her unpleasant position."

"Yes, of course."

"And her innocence proved."

"At the expense of another?" asked Bede, without lifting his eyes.

"No," answered the other in a low tone. "I do not think that need be."

Bede looked straight into the fire, his companion full at the window-blind, drawn half-way down; neither of them at one another.

"How will you avoid it?" asked Bede.

"I think it may be avoided, sir. For a little while past, I have foreseen that some such a crisis as this would come: and I have dwelt and dwelt upon it until I seem to be able to track out my way in it perfectly clear."

Bede cracked the coal in the grate; which did not require cracking. "Do you mean that you have foreseen Miss Rye would be taken? Such a thought in regard to her never crossed my mind."

"Nor mine. I alluded to myself, sir. If once I was discovered to be the so-called Godfrey Pitman—and some instinct told me the discovery was at last approaching—I knew that I should, in all probability, be charged with the murder of Mr. Ollivera. I—an innocent man—could not suffer for this, Mr. Greatorex; I should be obliged, in self-defence, to repel the accusation; and I have been considering how it might be done without compromising others. I think it can be."

"How?" repeated Bede shortly.

"By my not telling the whole truth. By not knowing—I mean not having recognized the—the one—who would be compromised if I did tell it. I think this is feasible, sir."

Just a momentary glance into each other's eyes: no more, and it spoke volumes. Bede, facing the fire again, stood several minutes in deep consideration. George Winter seemed occupied with one of his gloves that had a refractory button.

"In any case it must now be known who you are," said Bede.

"That will not signify. In throwing the onus of the —" he seemed to hesitate, as he had once hesitated in the last sentence—"the death off Miss Rye, I throw it equally off my own shoulders. I have for some months wished that I could declare myself."

"Why have you not done it?"

George Winter looked at his master, surprise in his eyes. "It is not for my own sake that I have kept concealed, sir."

No. Bede Greatorex knew that it was for *his*; at least for his interests; and felt the obligation in his heart. He did not speak it; pride and a variety of other unhappy feelings kept him silent. Of all the miserable moments that the death of John Ollivera had entailed upon him, this confidential interview with his clerk was not the least of them. Forced though he was to hold it, he hated it with his whole soul.

"You took that cheque from my desk," said Bede. "And wrote me the subsequent letter."

"I did not take it from the desk, sir. Your expressed and continuous belief—that you had put it in—was a mistaken one. It must have slipped from your hands when about to lock up the other papers you held, and fluttered under the desk-table. Perhaps you will allow me to give you the explanation now."

Bede nodded.

"In the morning of the day that the cheque was lost, you may remember coming into the front room and seeing a stranger with me. His name was Foster; a farmer and corn-dealer near Birmingham. I had been out on an errand, and, on turning in again, a gentleman stopped me to inquire the way. While I was directing him there ensued a mutual recognition. In one sense I owed him some money—forty-four pounds. Samuel Teague, of whom you may have heard—"

"I know," interrupted Bede.

"Samuel Teague, just before he ran away, had got me to put my name to a bill for him; Mr. Foster, in all good faith, had let him have the money for it. It had never been repaid. But upon Mr. Foster's meeting me that morning he gave me my choice—to find the money for him before he left London, or be denounced publicly as George Winter. I thought he would have denounced me then. He came into the office, and would not be got rid of; saying that he had looked for me too long to let me go, now that I was found. What I was to do I did not know. I had no objection to resume my own name, for I had cleared myself with Johnson and Teague, but it must have involved the exposure relating to the affair at Helstonleigh. The thought occurred to me of declaring the dilemma to you, letting you decide whether that exposure should come, or whether you would lend me the forty-four pounds to avert it. But I shrank from doing that."

"Why?" again interposed Bede.

"Because I thought *you* would dislike my entering upon the subject, sir. I have shrunk from it always. Now that the necessity is forced upon me, I am shrinking from it as I speak."

Ah, but not so much as Bede was. "Go on."

"While I sat at my desk, inwardly deliberating, Mr. Frank came in,
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asking you to draw out a cheque for Sir Richard Yorke for forty-four pounds. The strange coincidence between the sum and the money demanded of me struck me as being most singular. It strikes me so still. Later in the morning I came into this room with some deeds, and saw a piece of paper lying under the table. Upon picking it up, which I did simply to replace it on the desk, I found it was the cheque. My first thought was that it must be a special, almost a supernatural, intervention in my favour ; my second, that it was just possible you had left it there for me to take. Both ideas very far-fetched and imaginative, as I saw at once. But I used the cheque, Mr. Bede Greatorex. I went home, put on the false hair I had worn as Godfrey Pitman, for I have it by me still, and got the cheque cashed in gold. It was not for my sake I did this : I hated it bitterly. And then I hesitated to use the money. At night I went to Mr. Foster's hotel, and told him that I would get the money for him by the following night *if I could* ; if I could not, he must carry out his threat of denouncing me to the public and Mr. Greatorex. Foster consented to wait. I returned to my lodgings and wrote that anonymous note to you, sir, not telling you who had taken the cheque ; merely saying that exposure was threatened of the private circumstances, known only to one or two, attendant on Mr. Ollivera's death at Helstonleigh ; that the money had been taken to avert the exposure, and would be applied to that purpose, provided you were agreeable. If not, and you wished the money returned, you were requested to drop a note without loss of a moment to a certain address ; if no such note were written, the money would be used in the course of the day, and things kept silent as heretofore. You sent no answer, and I paid it to Foster in the evening. I have never been able to decide whether you suspected me as the writer or not."

"No. I fancied it might be Hurst."

"Hurst ?" exclaimed George Winter in great surprise.

Bede looked up for a moment. "I felt sure the cheque must have been taken by one of you in the next room. Not knowing you then for Godfrey Pitman, my thoughts fell on Hurst. His father was the attendant surgeon, and might have made some critical discovery."

"I don't see how he could have done that, sir," was the dissenting answer.

"Nor did I. But it is the doubt in these cases that causes the fear. I should like to ask you a question—was it by accident or purposed design that you came to our house as a clerk?"

"Purely by accident. When the misfortunes fell upon me in Birmingham, and I was unwise enough to follow Samuel Teague's example, and run away, I retained one friend, who stood by me. After quitting Helstonleigh on the Monday night, I concealed myself elsewhere for three or four days, and then went to him in Essex, where he lived. He

procured me a clerkship in a lawyer's office in the same county, Mr. Cale's, with whom I stayed about a year. Mr. Cale found me very useful, and when his health failed, and he retired in consequence from practice, he sent me up here to Mr. Greatorex with a strong recommendation."

"You have served us well," said Bede. "Was not your quitting Birmingham a mistake?"

"The worst I ever made. I solemnly declare that I was entirely innocent. Not only innocent myself, but unsuspicious of anything wrong on the part of Samuel Teague. He took me in, as he took in everybody else. Johnson and Teague know it now, and have at length done me the justice to acknowledge it. I knew of young Teague's profuse expenditure: he used to tell me he had the money from his uncle, old Mr. Teague, and it never occurred to me to doubt it. Where I erred, was in going to the old man and blurting out the truth. He died of the shock. I shall never forgive myself for that: it seemed to me always as though I had murdered him. With his dead form, as it seemed, pursuing me, with the knowledge that I was to be included in the charge of forgery, I lost my sober senses. In my fright, I saw no escape but in flight; and I got away on the Sunday afternoon as far as Helstonleigh. It was in the opposite direction to the one Samuel Teague was thought to have taken, and I wanted to see Alletha Rye, if it were practicable, and assure her before we finally parted, that, though bad enough, I was not quite the villain people were making me out to be. There—there are strange coincidences in this life, Mr. Bede Greatorex."

"You may well say that," answered Bede.

"And one of the strangest was that of my accidentally meeting Alletha Rye five minutes after I reached Helstonleigh. Forgetting my disguise, I stopped to accost her—and have not forgotten her surprise yet. But I had not courage then to tell her the truth: I simply said I was in trouble through false friends and was ill—which was really the case—and I asked her if she could shelter me for a day or two, or could recommend me to a place where I might be private and to myself. The result was, that I went to Mrs. Jones's house, introduced as a stranger, one Godfrey Pitman. I hit upon the name hap-hazard. And before I left it I was drawn into that business concerning Mr. Ollivera."

Bede Greatorex made no answer. A coincidence! Aye; one of heaven's sending.

"Why so much ill-luck should have fallen upon me I cannot tell," resumed George Winter. "I started in life hoping and intending to do my duty as conscientiously as most men do it; and I've tried to, that's more. Fate has not been kind to me."

"There are others it has been less kind to," spoke Bede, his tone marked with ill-suppressed agitation. "Your liabilities in Birmingham—are they wiped out?"

"Others' liabilities, you mean, sir; I had none of my own. Yes, I have scraped, and saved, and paid: paid all. I am saving now to repay *you* the forty-four pounds, and have about twenty towards it. But for having my good old mother on my hands—she lives in Wales—I should have been clear earlier."

"You need not trouble yourself about the forty-four pounds," said Bede, recognising the wondrous obligations he and his were under to this silent, self-denying man.

"If it were forty-four hundred, sir, I should work on until I paid it life being granted me."

"Very well," replied Bede. "I may be able to recompense you in another way."

If Bede Greatorex thought that any simple order of his would release Miss Rye from custody, he found himself mistaken. Butterby, called into the conference, was almost pleasantly derisive.

"You'll assure me she was not guilty! and Mr. Brown there can assure me she was not guilty! And, following them words up, you say, 'Let her go, Butterby!' Why, you might about as well tell me to let the stars drop out of the sky, Mr. Bede Greatorex. I've no more power over one than the other."

"But she is innocent," reiterated Bede. "Mr. Brown here—you know who he is—can testify to it."

Butterby gave a careless nod in the direction of Mr. Brown—as much as to say that his knowing who he was went for a matter of course. But he was sternly uncompromising.

"Look here, Mr. Bede Greatorex. It's all very well for you to say to me, Miss Rye's innocent; and for that there clever gentleman by your side to say she's innocent—and himself too, I suppose he'd like to add; but you, as a lawyer, must know that all that is of no manner of use. If you two will bring forward the right party, and say, 'This is the one that was guilty,' and *prove* it to the satisfaction of the law and Mr. Greatorex, that would be another thing. Only in that case can Miss Rye be set at liberty."

"You—you do not know what family interests are involved in this, Mr. Butterby," Bede said in a tone of pain.

"Can guess at 'em," responded Butterby. Bede inwardly thought the boast was a mistaken one, but he let it pass.

"If my father were acquainted with the true facts of the case," spoke he, "he would never bring it to a public trial; I tell you this on my honour."

"You know yourself who the party was; I see that," said Butterby. "I do—Heaven help me!"

There was a strange tone of helplessness mingling with the anguish of the avowal, as if Bede could contend with fate no longer. Even the officer felt for him. George Winter looked round at him with a glance

of caution, as much as to say there was no necessity to avow too much. Bede bent his head, and strove to see, as well as the hour's trouble and perplexity would allow him, what might and what might not be done. Butterby, responsible to the magistrates at Helstonleigh who had granted the warrant, would have to be satisfied, as well as Mr. Greatorex.

Another minute, and Bede went forth to seek an interview with his father, and found him alone in his room. Bede, almost as though he were afraid of his courage leaving him, entered upon the matter before he had well closed the door. Not in any torrent of words: he spoke but a few, and those with almost painful calmness: but his breath was laboured, himself perceptibly agitated.

"Give my authority to Butterby to release Alletha Rye from custody, because you happen to know that she is innocent!" exclaimed Mr. Greatorex, in surprise. "Why, what can you mean, Bede?"

Bede told his tale. Hampered by various doubting fears lest he might drop an unsafe word, it was rather a lame one. Mr. Greatorex leaned back in his chair, and looked up at Bede as he listened. They held, unconsciously, much the same position as they had that March day nearly five years ago in another room, when the tale of the death was first told, Bede having then just got up with it from Helstonleigh: Mr. Greatorex sitting, Bede standing with his arm on the mantel-piece, his face partly turned away. Bede had grown quite into the habit of standing thus to press his hand on his brow: it seemed as though some weight or pain were always there.

"I don't understand you, Bede," spoke Mr. Greatorex, frankly. "You tell me that you know of your own cognizance Alletha Rye was innocent? That you knew it at the time?"

"Almost of my own cognizance," corrected Bede.

"Which must be equivalent to saying that you know who was guilty."

"No; I—don't know that," murmured Bede, his face growing damp with the conscious lie.

"Then what do you know, that you should wish to interfere? You have always said it was a case of suicide."

"It was not that, father," was Bede's low, shrinking answer. But he looked into his father's eyes with thrilling earnestness as he gave it.

Mr. Greatorex began to feel slightly uncomfortable. He detested mystery of all kinds; and there was something unpleasantly mysterious in Bede's voice, and looks, and words, and manner.

"Did you know at the time that it was not suicide?" pursued Mr. Greatorex.

How should Bede get through this? say what he must say, and yet not say too much? He inwardly asked himself the question.

"There was just a suspicion of it on my mind, sir. Any way, Alletha Rye must be set at liberty."

"I do not understand what you say, Bede; I do not understand *you*.

Your manner on this subject has always been an enigma. William Ollivera holds the opinion that you must be screening some one."

A terrible temptation, hard to battle with, assailed Bede Greatorex at the charge—to avow to his father who and what he had been screening ever since the death. He forced himself to silence until it had passed.

"What is troubling you, Bede?"

Mr. Greatorex might well ask it, with that sad countenance in front of him, working with its pain. In his grievous perplexity, Bede gave the true answer.

"I was thinking if it were possible for Pitman's explanation to be avoided, father."

"What! Is Pitman found?"

"Yes, he is found," quietly answered Bede. "He——"

The room door was opening to admit some visitors, and Bede turned. Surely the propitious star to the House of Greatorex could not be in the ascendant! For they were Judge Kene and Henry William Ollivera.

And the concealment that he had striven and toiled for, and worn out his health and life to keep; fighting ever, mentally or bodily, against Fate's relentless hand, was felt to be at an end by Bede Greatorex.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

NEARER AND NEARER.

ON a sofa, drawn at right angles with the fire, lay Hamish Channing; his bright head raised high, a crimson coverlid of eider-down thrown over his feet. In the last day or two he had grown perceptibly worse; that is, weaker. The most sanguine amidst his friends, medical or others, could not say there was hope now. But, as long as he could keep up, Hamish would not give in to his illness: he rose in the morning, and made a pretence of going about the house; and when he was tired, lay on the sofa that had been put into his writing-room. It was the room he felt most at home in, and he seemed to cling to it.

On the other side the hearth, bending forward in his chair, staring at Hamish with sad eyes, and pulling at his whiskers in grievous gloom, sat Roland Yorke. Roland had abandoned his home-copying for the past two days, and spent all his spare time with Hamish. Mrs. Jones, snatching a moment to go and visit Mr. Channing for old associations' sake, had been very much struck with what she saw in him, and carried home the news that he was certainly dying. Roland, believing Mrs. J. to be as correct in judgment as she was tart in speech, had been looking out for death from that moment. Previously he was given to waver; one moment in despair; the next, up in the skies with exultation, and

thinking recovery had set in. The wind could not be more variable than Roland.

It was the twilight hour of the winter's day. The room was not lighted yet, but the blaze from the fire played on Hamish's face as he lay. There was a change in it to-night, and it told upon Roland; for it looked like the shadow of death. Things seemed to have been rather at sixes and sevens in the office that afternoon: Mr. Brown was absent, Hurst had gone home for Christmas, Bede Greatorex did not show himself, and there was nobody to tell Roland what work to be about. Of course it presented to that gentleman's mind a most valuable opportunity for enjoying a spell of recreation, and he took French leave to abandon it to itself and little Jenner. Rushing home in the first place, to see what might be doing there—for it was the day that Miss Rye had been captured by Butterby—Roland had his run for his pains. There was nothing doing, and his curiosity and good-nature alike suffered. Miss Rye was a prisoner still; she, and Mrs. Jones, and the policeman left in charge, being shut up in the parlour together. "It's an awful shame of old Butterby!" cried Roland, to himself, as he sped along to Hamish's. There he took up his station in his favourite chair, and watched the face that was fading so rapidly away. With an etherealized look in it that spoke of heaven, with a placid calm that seemed to partake of the fast approaching rest; with a sweet smile that told of altogether inward peace, there the face lay; and Roland thought he had never seen one on earth so like an angel's.

Hamish had dropped into a doze; as he often did, at the close of day, when darkness is silently spreading over the light. Nelly Channing, who had learnt—by that subtle warning that sometimes steals, we know not how, over the instinct of little ones about to be made orphans—that some great and sad change was looming in the air, sat on a stool on the hearth-rug as sedately as any old woman. Nelly's boisterous ways and gleeful laugh had left her for a while: example perhaps taught her to be still, and she largely profited by it.

On her lap lay a story-book: papa had bought it for her yesterday: that is, had given the money to Miss Nelly and nurse when they went out, and wrote down the title of the book they were to buy, and the shop they might get it at, with his own trembling fingers, out of which the strength had nearly gone. It was one of those exquisite story-books that ought to be in all children's hands, Mrs. Sherwood's; belonging of course to a past day, but nothing has since been written like them.

With every leaf that she silently turned, Nelly looked to see that it did not wake the invalid. When she grew tired, and her face was roasted to a red heat, she went to Roland, resting the open book upon his knee. He lifted her up.

"It is such a pretty book, Roland."

"All right. Don't you make a noise, Nelly."

"Margaret went to heaven in the book; she was buried under the great yew-tree," whispered Nelly. "Papa's going there."

Roland caught the little head to him, and bent his face on the golden hair. He knew that what she said was true: but it was a shock nevertheless to have it repeated openly to him even by this young child.

"Papa talks to me about it. It will be so beautiful! he will never be tired there, or have any sorrow or pain. Oh, Roland; I wish I was going with him!"

Her eyes were filled with tears as she looked up; Roland's were filled in sympathy. He had cried like a schoolboy more than once of late. All on a sudden, happening to glance across, he saw Hamish looking on with a smile.

"You be off, Nelly," said arbitrary Roland, carrying her to the door and shutting it upon her and her book. "I'm sure your tea must be ready in the nursery."

"Don't grieve, Roland," said Hamish, when he sat down again.

"I wish you could get well," returned Roland, seeing the fire through a mist.

"And I have nearly ceased to wish it, Roland. It's all for the best."

"Ceased to wish it! How's that?"

"Through God's mercy, I think."

The words silenced Roland. When anything of this kind was mentioned it turned him into a child, so far as his feelings went; simple as Miss Nelly was he, and a vast deal more humble-minded.

"Things are being cleared for me so wonderfully, Roland. But for leaving some who are dear to me, the pain would be over."

"I wish I could come across that fiend who wrote the reviews!" was Roland's muttered answer to this. "I wish I could!"

"What?" said Hamish, not catching the words.

"I will say it, then; I don't care," cried impetuous Roland—for no one had ever spoken before Hamish of what was supposed to have caused him the cruel pain. Roland blurted it all out now in his explosive fashion; his own long-suppressed wrath, and what he held in store for the anonymous reviewer, when he should have the good fortune to come across him.

A minute's silence when he ceased, a wild hectic spreading itself into the hollow cheeks—that it should so stir him even yet! Hamish held out his hand, and Roland came across to take it. The good sweet eyes looked into his.

"If ever you do 'come across' him, Roland, say that I forgive," came the low, earnest whisper. "I did think it cruel at the time; well nigh too hard to bear; but, like most other crosses, I seem to see now that it came to me direct from heaven."

"That is good, Hamish! Come!"

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom," whispered Hamish, looking up at him with a yearning smile. "You have in all probability a long life before you, Roland: but the time may come when you will realize the truth of those words."

Roland swallowed down a lump in his throat as he turned to the fire again. Hamish resumed, changing his tone for one almost of gaiety.

"I have had good news to-day. Our friend the publisher called; and what do you think he told me, Roland? That my book was finding its way at last."

"Of course it will. Everybody always thought it must. If you could but have put off for a time your bother over the reviews, Hamish!" Roland added, piteously.

"Ay. He says that in three months' time from this, the book will be in every one's hands. In the satisfaction of the news, I sat down and ate some luncheon with him and Ellen."

"Don't you think the news might be enough to cure you?" asked sanguine Roland.

Hamish shook his head. "If I were able to feel joy now as I felt the sorrow, it might perhaps go a little way towards it. But that is over, Roland. The capability of feeling either in any degree was crushed out of me."

Roland rubbed up his hair. If he had but that enemy of his under his hand, and a spacious arena that admitted of pitching-in!

"And now for some more good news, Roland. You must know how I have been troubled at the thought of leaving Ellen and the child unprovided for—"

"I say, don't you! Don't you trouble, Hamish!" came the impulsive interruption. "I'll work for them. I'll do my very best for them, as well as for Annabel."

"It won't be needed, dear old friend," and Hamish's face, with its bright, grateful smile, almost looked like the sunny one of old. "Ellen's father, Mr. Huntley, is regaining the wealth he feared he had lost. As an earnest of it, he has sent Ellen two hundred pounds. It was paid her to-day."

"Oh, now, isn't that good, Hamish!"

"Very good!" answered Hamish, reverently and softly, as certain words ran through his mind: "So great is His mercy towards them that trust in Him." "And so, Roland, all things are working round pleasantly that I may die in peace."

Mrs. Channing, coming in with her things on, for she had been out on some necessary business, interrupted the conversation. She mentioned to Roland, that she had seen Gerald drive up to his wife's rooms, and that he had promised to come round.

"Why, I thought he was at Sunny Mead with Dick!"

"He told me he had just returned from it."

"I say, Hamish, who knows but he may have brought me up a message!" cried Roland.

Hamish smiled. Roland had disclosed the fact in family conclave, of his having applied for the place of bailiff to Sir Vincent: Annabel being present. He had recited, so far as he could remember them, the very words of the letter, over which Hamish had laughed himself into a coughing-fit.

"To be sure," answered Hamish, with a touch of his old jesting spirit. "Gerald may have brought up your appointment, Roland."

That was quite enough. "I'll go and ask him," said Roland, eagerly. "Any way he may be able to tell me how Dick received it."

Away went Roland, on the spur of the moment. It was a clear, cold evening, the air sharp and frosty; and Roland ran all the way to Mrs. Gerald Yorke's.

That lady was not in tears this evening: but her mood was a gloomy one, her face fractious. The tea was on the table, and she was cutting thick bread-and-butter for the three little girls sitting so quietly round it, before their cups of milk-and-water. Gerald had gone out again: she did not know where; whether temporarily, or to his chambers for the night, or anything about him.

"I think something must have gone wrong at Sunny Mead," observed Winny. "When I asked what brought him back so soon, he only swore. Perhaps Sir Vincent refused to lend money, and they had a quarrel. I know Gerald meant to ask him: he is in dreadful embarrassment."

"Mamma," pleaded a little voice, "there's no butter on my bread."

"There's as much as I can afford to put, Kitty," was Mrs. Yorke's answer. "I must keep some for the morning. Suppose your papa should find no butter for breakfast, if he comes home to sleep to-night! My goodness!"

"Bread-and-scrape's not good, is it Kitty?" said Roland.

"No," plaintively answered the child.

Roland clattered out, taking the stairs at a leap. Mrs. Yorke supposed he had left without the ceremony of saying good-night.

"Just like his manners!" she fractiously cried. "But oh! don't I wish Gerald was like him in temper!"

Roland had not gone for the night. He happened to have a shilling in his pocket, and went to buy a sixpenny pot of marmalade. As he was skimming back with it, his eye fell on some small shrimps exposed for sale on a fishmonger's board. The temptation (with the loose six-pence in his hand) was not to be resisted.

He carried in the treasures. But that the three little ones were very meek-spirited, they would have shouted at the sight. Roland lavishly

spread the marmalade on the bread-and-scrape, and began pulling out shrimps for the company round, while he talked of Hamish.

"They are saying that those reviews that were so harsh upon his book have helped to kill him," said Mrs. Yorke, in a low tone, turning from the table to face Roland.

"But for those reviews he'd not have died," answered Roland. "I never will believe it. Illness might have come on, but he'd have had the spirit to throw it off again."

"Yes. When I sit and look at him, Roland, it seems as if I and Gerald were wretches that ought to hide ourselves. I say to myself, it was not my fault; but I *feel* it for all that."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Roland.

"About the reviews. I can't bear to go there now."

"What about the reviews?"

"It was Gerald who wrote them."

Roland, for convenience' sake, had the plate of shrimps on his knee during the picking process. He rested from his work, and stared in a kind of puzzle. Winny continued:

"Those reviews were all Gerald's doings. That dreadful one in the *Snarler* he wrote himself, here, and was two days over it, getting to it at times as ideas and strong words occurred to him to make it worse and worse: just as he wrote the one of praise on his own book. The other reviews, that were every bit as bad, he got written. I read every word of the one in the *Snarler* in manuscript. I wanted to tell him it was wicked, but he might have shaken me. He said he owed Hamish Channing a grudge, and should get his book damned. That's not my word, you know, Roland. And all the while it was Hamish who was doing so much for me and the poor children: finding us in food when Gerald did not."

No whiter could Hamish Channing's face look when the marble palleness of death should have overshadowed it, than Roland's was now. For a short while it seemed as though the communication was too astounding to find admittance to his mind. Suddenly he rose up with a great cry. Down went shrimps, and plate, and all; and he was standing upright before Mrs. Yorke.

"Is it true? Is it *true*?"

"Why, of course it's true," she fractiously answered, for the movement had startled her. "Gerald did it all. I'd not tell anybody but you, Roland."

Throwing his hat on his head, hind part before, away dashed Roland. Panting, wild, his breath escaping him in great sobs, like unto one who has received some strong mental shock, he arrived at Mr. Channing's in a frantic state. Vague ideas of praying at Hamish's feet for forgiveness were surging through his brain, for it seemed to Roland that *he*, as Gerald's brother, must be in a degree responsible for this terrible thing.

The door opened, he turned into the dining-room, and found himself in the presence of—Gerald. Hamish, feeling unusually weak, had gone up to bed, and Gerald was waiting the signal to go to him. As he supposed he must call to see Hamish before it should be too late—for Ellen had told him how it was that afternoon—he had come at once to get the visit over.

Of all the torrents of reproach ever flung at a man, Gerald found himself astounded by about the worst. It was not loud: loudness might have carried off somewhat of the sting: but painfully sad and bitter.

Roland stood on the hearth-rug in front of Gerald as he had but now stood before his wife; with the same white and stricken face; with the same agitation shaking him from head to foot. The sobbing words broke from him in jerks: the voice was a wail.

“Was it not enough that I brought disgrace on Arthur Channing in the years gone by, but you, another of us ill-doing Yorkes, must destroy Hamish?” panted Roland. “Good Lord! why did heaven suffer us two to live! As true as we are standing together here, Gerald, had I known at the time those false reviews were yours, I should have broken your bones for you!”

“You shut up,” retorted Gerald. “It’s nothing to you.”

“Nothing to me! Nothing to *me*—when one of the best men that ever lived on earth has been wilfully sent to his grave? Yes; I don’t care how you may salve over your conscience, Gerald Yorke; it is murder, and nothing less. What had he done to you? He was a true friend, a true, good friend to you and to me: what crime against us had he committed, that you should treat him like this?”

“If you don’t go out of the house, I will,” said Gerald. But Roland never seemed to so much as hear it.

“Who do you suppose has been helping you all this year?” demanded Roland. “When you were afraid of the county-court over a boot-bill, somebody paid the money and sent you the receipt anonymously: who has kept your wife and children in rent and clothes and food and all kinds of comforts, while you gave wine-parties in your chambers, and went staring it over the seas for weeks in people’s yachts? Hamish Channing. He deprived himself of his holiday, that your wife and children might be fed, you abandoning them: he has lived sparingly in spite of his failing health, that you and yours might profit. You and he were brought up in the same place, boys together, and he could not see your children want. They’ve never had a fraction of help but what it came from Hamish and his wife.”

“It is a lie!” said Gerald. But he was staggered, and he felt that it was not.

“It is the truth, as heaven knows,” cried Roland, breaking down with a burst. “Ask Winny; *she* told me. I’d have given my own poor

worthless life freely to save the pain of those false and cruel reviews to Hamish."

Sheer emotion stopped Roland's tongue. Mrs. Channing, entering, found the room in silence, the storm was over. Roland escaped. Gerald, amazingly uncomfortable, had a mind to run away there and then.

"Will you come up, Gerald?"

Hamish lay in bed in his large cheerful chamber, bright with fire and light. His head was raised; one hand was thrown over the white coverlid; and a cup of tea waited on a stand by the bed-side. Roland stood by the fire, his chest heaving.

"But what is it, old fellow?" demanded Hamish. "What has put you out?"

"It is *this*, Hamish, that I wish I could have died instead of you," came the answer at last, with a burst of grief.

He sat down in the shade in a quiet corner, for his brother's step was heard. As Gerald approached the bed, he visibly recoiled. It was some time since he had seen Hamish, and he verily believed he stood in the presence of death. Hamish held out his hand with a cheering smile, and his face grew bright.

"Dear old friend! I thought you were never coming to see me."

Gerald Yorke was not wholly hard, not quite devoid of feeling. With the dying man before him, with the truths he had just heard beating their refrain in his ears, he nearly broke down as Roland had done. Oh, that he could undo his work! that he could recall life to the fading spirit as easily as he had done his best to take it away! These regrets always come rather late, Mr. Gerald Yorke.

"I did not think you were so ill as this, Hamish. Can nothing be done?"

"Don't let it grieve you, Gerald. Our turns must all come, sooner or later. Don't, old fellow," he added in a whisper, "I must keep up for Ellen's sake. God is helping me to do it: oh, so wonderfully."

Gerald bent over him: he thought they were alone. "Will you forgive me?"

"Forgive you!" repeated Hamish, not understanding what there was to forgive.

And Gerald, striving against his miserably pricking conscience, could not bring himself to say. No, though it had been to save his own life, he dared not confess to his cowardly sin.

"I have not always been the good friend to you I might, Hamish. Do say you forgive me, for Heaven's sake."

Hamish took his hand, a sweet smile upon his face. "If there is anything you want my forgiveness for, Gerald, take it. Take it freely. Oh Gerald, when we begin to realize the great fact that our sins are forgiven, forgiven and washed out, you cannot think how *glad* we are to forgive

others who may have offended us. But I don't know what I have to forgive in you."

Gerald's chest heaved. Roland's, in his distant chair in the shade, heaved rebelliously.

"I had ambitious views for you, Gerald. I meant to do you good if I could. I thought when my book was out and had brought funds to me, I would put you straight. I was so foolishly sanguine as to fancy the returns would be large. I thought of you nearly as much as I thought of myself: one of my dear old friends of dear old Helston-leigh. The world is fading from me, Gerald; but the old scenes and times will be with me to the last. Yes, I had hoped to benefit you Gerald, but it was otherwise ordained. God bless you, dear friend, God love and prosper you, and bring you home to Him!"

Gerald could not stand it any longer. As he left the room and the house, Roland went up to the bed with a burst, and confessed all. To have kept in the secret would have choked him.

Gerald was the enemy who had done it; all Gerald Yorke had been the one to sow the tares amid the wheat in his neighbour's field.

A moment of exquisite pain for Hamish; a slight, short struggle with the human passions, not yet quite dead within his aching breast, and then his loving-kindness resumed its sway, never again to quit him.

"Bring him back to me, dear Roland; bring him back that I may send him on his way with words of better comfort," he whispered, with his ineffable smile of peace.

CHAPTER XL.

GODFREY PITMAN'S TALE.

SHUT in with closed doors, George Winter told his tale. Not quite all he could tell; and not the truth in one very important particular. If that single item of fact might be kept secret to the end, the speaker's will was good for it.

They were all standing. Not one sat. And the room seemed filled with the six men in it, most of whom were tall. The crimson curtain that Annabel Channing had mended was drawn before the book-case: on the table-cover lay pens and ink and paper, for Mr. Greatorex sometimes wrote at night in his own room. He and Judge Kene were near each other; the clergyman was almost within the shadow of the window-curtain; Bede a little further behind. On the opposite side of the table, telling his tale, with the light of the bright winter's day falling full upon him, illumining every turn of his face, and, so to say, every word he uttered, was George Winter. And, at right angles with the whole assemblage, his keen eyes and ears taking in every word and look in silence, stood the detective, Jonas Butterby.

Mr. Greatorex, in spite of his son Bede's protestations, had refused to sanction any steps for the release of Alletha Rye from custody. As for Butterby, in that matter he seemed more inexorably hard than a granite stone. "Show us that the young woman is innocent before you talk about it," said they both with reason. And so George Winter was had in to relate what he knew; and Mr. Greatorex—not to speak of some of the rest—felt that his senses were temporarily struck out of him, when he discovered that his efficient and trusted clerk, Brown, was the long-sought after and ill-reputed Godfrey Pitman.

With a brief summary of the circumstances which had led him, disguised, and under the false name of Pitman, to Mrs. Jones's house at Helstonleigh, George Winter passed on to the night of the tragedy, and to the events which had taken him back to the house after his departure from it in the afternoon. If ever Mr. Butterby's silent eyes wore an eager light, it was then: not the faintest turn of a look, not the smallest syllable was lost upon him.

"When I had been a week at Mrs. Jones's, I began to think it might be unsafe to remain longer," he said; "and I resolved to take my departure on the Monday. I let it transpire in the house that I was going to Birmingham by the five o'clock train. This was to put people off the scent, for I did not mean to go by that train at all, but by a later one in an opposite direction—in fact, by the eight o'clock train for Oxford: and I had thought to wait about, near the station, until that hour. At half-past four I said Good day to Mrs. Jones, and went out: but I had not gone many yards from the door, when I saw one of the Birmingham police, who knew me personally. I had my disguises on, the spectacles and the false hair, but I feared he might recognize me in spite of them. I turned my back for some minutes, apparently looking close into a shop-window, and when the officer had disappeared, stole back to Mrs. Jones's again. The door was open, and I went upstairs without being seen, intending to wait until dusk."

"A moment, if you please," interrupted Mr. Greatorex. "It would seem that this was about the time that Mr. Ollivera returned to Mrs. Jones's. Did you see him?"

"I did not, sir; I saw no one."

"Go on."

"I waited in my room at the top of the house, and when night set in, began to watch for an opportunity of getting away unseen by the household, and so avoid questionings as to what had brought me back. It seemed not too easy of accomplishment: the servant-girl was at the street-door, and Alfred Jones (as I had learnt his name to be) came in and began to ascend the stairs. When half-way up, he turned back with some gentleman who came out of the drawing-room—whom I know now, but did not then, to be Mr. Bede Greatorex. Alfred Jones saw him to the front door, and then ran up again. I escaped

to my room, and locked myself in. He went to his own, and soon I heard him go down and quit the house. In a few minutes I went out of my room again with my blue bag, ready for departure, and stood on the stairs to reconnoitre——”

“Can you explain the cause of those grease spots that we have heard of?” interrupted Bede Greatorex at this juncture. And it might almost have seemed from the fluttering emotion of his tone, which could not be wholly suppressed, that he dreaded the revelation he knew must be coming, and put the question only to delay it.

“Yes, sir. While Alfred Jones was in his room, I dropped my silver pencil-case, and had to light a candle to seek it. I suppose that, in searching, I must have held the candle aside and let the drops of tallow fall on the carpet.”

“Go on,” again interposed Mr. Greatorex, impatiently. “You went out on the stairs with your bag. What next?”

The witness—if he may be termed such—passed his hand slowly over his forehead before answering. It appeared as though he were recalling the past.

“As I stood there, on the top of the first flight, the sound of voices, in what seemed like angry dispute, came from the drawing-room. One in particular was raised in passionate fury; the other was less loud. I did not hear what was said; the door was shut——” ¶

“Were they both men’s voices?” interrupted Mr. Ollivera—and it was the first question he had put.

“Yes,” came the answer; but it was given in a low tone, and with somewhat of hesitation. “At least, I think so.”

“Well?”

“The next thing that I heard was the report of a pistol, followed by a cry of pain. Another cry succeeded to it in a different voice, a cry of horror; and then silence supervened.”

“And you did not go in?” exclaimed Mr. Ollivera, in agitation, taking a step forward.

“No. I am aware it is what I ought to have done; and I have reproached myself later for not having done it; but I felt afraid to disclose to any one that I was yet in the house. It might have led to the discovery of who and what I was. Besides, I thought there was no great harm done; I declare it, upon my honour. I could still hear sounds within the room as of some one, or more, moving about, and I certainly heard one voice speaking low and softly. I thought I saw my opportunity for slipping away, and had crept down nearly to the drawing-room door, when it suddenly opened, very quietly, and a face looked out. Whoever it might be, I suppose the sight of me scared them, for they retreated, and the door was reclosed softly. It scared me also, sending me back up-stairs; and I remained up until the same person (as I supposed) came out again, descended the stairs, and left

the house. I got out myself then, gained the railway station by a circuitous route, and got safely away from Helstonleigh."

As the words died upon the ear, there ensued a pause of silence. The clergyman broke it. His mind seemed to be harping on one string.

"Mr. Brown, was that person a man or a woman?"

"Oh, it was a man," answered Mr. Brown, looking down at his waistcoat, and brushing a speck off it with an air of carelessness. But something in his demeanour at that moment struck two people in the room as being peculiar—Judge Kene and Mr. Butterby.

"Should you recognize him again?" continued the clergyman.

"I cannot say. Perhaps I might."

"And you can stand there, Mr. Brown, and deliberately avow that you did not know a murder had been committed?" interposed the sternly condemning voice of Mr. Greatorex.

"On my sacred word of honour, I declare to you, sir, that no suspicion of it at the time occurred to me," answered the clerk, turning his eyes with fearless honesty on Mr. Greatorex. "When I got to learn what had really happened—which was not for some weeks—I wondered at myself. All I could suppose was, that the fear and apprehension I lay under on my own score, had rendered me callous to other impressions."

"Was it *you* who went in, close upon the departing heels of Mr. Bede Greatorex, and did this cruel thing?" asked Judge Kene, with quiet emphasis, as he gazed in the face of the narrator.

"No," as quietly, and certainly as calmly, came the answer, "I had no cause to injure Mr. Ollivera. I never saw him in my life. I am not sure that I knew there was a barrister of the name. I don't think I ever heard of him until after he was in the grave where he is now lying."

"But—you must have known Mr. Ollivera was sojourning in Mrs. Jones's house at the same time that you were?"

"I beg your pardon, Sir Thomas; I did not know that any one was lodging there except myself. Miss Rye, whom I saw for a few minutes occasionally, never mentioned it, neither did the servant, and they were the only two inmates I conversed with. For all I knew, or thought, Mrs. Jones occupied the drawing-room herself. I once saw her sitting there, and the maid was carrying out the tea-tray. No," emphatically concluded the speaker, "I did not know Mr. Ollivera was in the house; and if I had known it, I should not have sought to harm him."

The words were simple enough; and they were true. Judge Kene, skilled in reading tones and looks, saw that much. The party felt at a nonplus: as far as Alletha Rye went, the taking her into custody appeared to have been a mistake.

"You will swear to this testimony of yours, Mr. — Winter?"

"When you please. The slight amount of facts—the sounds—that reached me in regard to what took place in Mr. Olivera's room, I have related truthfully. Far from Miss Rye's having had aught to do with it, she was not even in the house at the time: I affirm it as before heaven."

"Who was the man?" asked Judge Kene—and Mr. Butterby, as he heard the question, gave a kind of derisive sniff. "Come; tell us that, Mr. Winter."

"I cannot tell you," was George Winter's answer. "Whoever it was, he went down the stairs quickly. I was looking over the top balustrades then, and caught but a transient glimpse of him."

"But you saw his face beforehand?—when he looked out of the room?"

"I saw some one's face. Only for a minute. Had I known what was to come of it later, I might have noticed better."

"And is this *all* you have to tell us?" cried Henry William Olivera, in agitation.

"Indeed it is all. But it is sufficient to exonerate Miss Rye."

"And now, Bede, what do *you* know?" suddenly spoke Mr. Greatorex. "You have acknowledged to me that you suspected at the time it was not a case of suicide."

Bede Greatorex came forward. All eyes were turned upon him. That he was nervously himself to speak, and far more inwardly agitated than appeared on the surface, the two practised observers saw. Judge Kene looked at him critically and curiously: there was something in the case altogether, and in Bede himself, that puzzled him.

"It is not much that I have to tell," began Bede, in answer to his father, as he put his hand heavily on the table, it might be for a support to rest on: and his brow seemed to take a pallid hue, and the silver threads in his once beautiful hair were very conspicuous as he stood. "A circumstance caused me to suspect that it was not a case of suicide. In fact, that it was somewhat as Mr. Brown has described it to be—namely, that some one else caused the death."

A pause of perfect silence. It seemed to Bede that the very coals, crackling in the grate, sounded like thunder.

"What was the circumstance?" asked Mr. Greatorex, for no one else liked to interrupt. "Why did you not speak of it at the time?"

"I could not speak of it then: I cannot speak of it fully now. It was of a nature so—so—so—." Bede came to a full stop: was he getting too agitated to speak, or could he not find a word? "What I would say is," he continued, in a firm low tone, rallying his nerves, "that it was sufficient to show me the facts must have been very much as Mr. Brown now states them."

"Then you only *think* that, Bede?"

"It is more than thinking. By all my hopes of Heaven, I declare that Alletha Rye had not, and could not have had, anything to do with John's death," he added, with emotion. "Father, you may believe me: I do know so much."

"But why can you not disclose what it is you know?"

"Because the time has not come for it. William, you are looking at me with reproachful eyes: if I could tell you more, I would. The secret—so much as I know of it—has lain on me with a leaden weight: I would only have been too glad to disburthen myself of it at first, had it been possible."

"And what rendered it impossible?" questioned the clergyman.

"That which renders it so now. I may not speak; if I might, I should be far more thankful than any of you who hear me."

"Is it a secret of trust reposed in you?"

Bede paused. "Well, yes; in a degree. If I were to speak of what I know, I do not think there is one present"—and Bede's glance ran rapidly over each individual face—"but would hush it within his own breast, as I have done."

"And you have a suspicion of who the traitor was?"

"A suspicion I may have. But for aught else—for elucidation—you and I must be content alike to wait."

"Elucidation!" spoke the clergyman, in something like derision. "It will not, I presume, ever be allowed to come."

"Yes it will, William," answered Bede, quietly. "Time—events—heaven—all are working rapidly on for it. Alletha Rye is innocent; I could not affirm that truth to you more solemnly if I were dying. She must be set at liberty."

As it was only on the question of her guilt or innocence that the counsel had been called, it seemed that there was nothing more to do than to break it up. An uncomfortable sensation of doubt, dissatisfaction, and mystery, lay on all. The clergyman stalked away in haughty displeasure. Bede Greatorex, under cover of the crowd, slid his hand gratefully for a moment into that of George Winter, his sad eyes sending forth their thanks. Then he turned to the Judge.

"You can give the necessary authority for the release, Sir Thomas."

"Can I?" was the answer, as Sir Thomas looked at him. "I'll talk about it with Butterby. But I should like to have a private word first with Mr. Winter."

"Why! you do not doubt that she is innocent?"

"Oh, dear no; I no longer doubt that. Winter," he added, in a whisper, laying his hand on the clerk's shoulder to draw him outside, "whose face was it that you saw at the door of the room?"

"Tell him," said Bede, suddenly, for he had followed them. "You will keep the secret, Kene, as I have kept it?"

"If it be as I suspect, I will," emphatically replied the Judge.

"Tell him," repeated Bede, as he walked away. "Tell him all that you know, Winter, from first to last."

It caused Mr. Greatorex and Butterby to be left alone together. The former, not much more pleased than William Ollivera, utterly puzzled, hurt at the want of confidence displayed by Bede in not trusting him, was in a downright ill-temper.

"What the devil is all this, Butterby?" demanded he. "What does it mean?"

Mr. Butterby, cool as a cucumber, let his eyelashes close for a moment over his non-betraying eyes, and then answered in meek simplicity.

"Ah, that's just it, sir—what it means. 'Wait,' says your son, Mr. Bede; 'wait patiently till things has worked round a bit, till such time as I can speak out.' And depend upon it, Mr. Greatorex, he has good cause to give the advice."

"But what can it be that he has to tell? And why should he wait at all to tell it?"

"Well, I suppose he'd like to be more certain of the party," answered Butterby, with a dubious cough. "Take a word of advice from me too, Mr. Greatorex, on this here score, if I may make bold to offer it—do wait. Don't force your son to disclose things afore they are ripe. It might be better for all parties."

Mr. Greatorex looked at him. "Who is it that *you* suspect?"

"Me!" exclaimed Butterby. "Me suspect! Why, what with one odd thought or another, I'd as lieve say it must have been the man in the moon, for all the clue we've got. It was not Miss Rye: there can't be two opinions about that. I told you, sir, I had my strong doubts when you ordered her to be apprehended."

"At any rate, you said she confessed to having done it," sharply spoke Mr. Greatorex, vexed with everybody.

"Confound the foolish women! what would the best of 'em not confess to, to screen a sweetheart? Alletha Rye has been thinking Winter guilty all this while, and when it came to close quarters and there seemed a fear that he'd be taken up for it, she said what she did to save him. *I* see it all. I saw it afore Godfrey Pitman was half way through his tale: and matters that have staggered me in Miss Rye, are just as clear to read now as the printing in a big book. When she made that there display at the grave—which you've heard enough of, may be, Mr. Greatorex—she had not had her doubts turned on Godfrey Pitman; she'd thought he was safe away earlier in the afternoon: when she got to learn he had come back again in secret, and was in the house at the time, why then she jumped to the conclusion that he had done the murder. *I* remember."

Mr. Butterby was right. This was exactly how it had been. Alletha Rye had deemed George Winter guilty all along; on his side, he had

only supposed she shunned him on account of the affair at Birmingham. There had been mutual misunderstanding, tacit, shrinking avoidance of all explanation, and not a single word of confidence to clear it up. George Winter could not seek to be too explicit so long as the secret he was guarding had to be kept: if not for his own sake, for that of others, he was silent.

"As to what Bede's driving at, and who he suspects, I am in ignorance," resumed Mr. Greatorex. "I am not pleased with his conduct: he ought to let me know what he knows."

"Now, don't you blame him afore you hear his reasons, sir. He's sure to have 'em: and I say let him alone till he can take his own time for disclosing things." Which won't be of one while, was the mental conclusion.

"About Miss Rye? Are you here, Butterby?"

The interruption came from Judge Kene. As he walked in, closing the door after him, they could but be struck with the aspect of his face. It was all over of a grey pallor; very much as though its owner had received some shock of terror.

"What is the matter, Judge?" hastily asked Mr. Greatorex. "Are you ill?"

"Ill? No. Why do you ask? Look so!—Oh, I have been standing in a room without fire, and grew rather cold there," carelessly replied the Judge.

(*To be continued.*)



BYRON'S DAUGHTER.

[From the unsparing manner in which Lord Byron, his wife, and all connected with them, have recently been made the property of the world for discussion and gossip, it may be deemed that no apology is necessary for introducing the following paper into the pages of a magazine. But when such intrusion into private affairs is ventured on, apology is always due: and it is now offered heartily. Had the article contained a word that could give pain, it would not have been inserted. Offensive statements have been made, insidious reflections whispered: to meet and confute them is almost a public duty. The comprehensive grasp of intellect, the noble sentiments, the innate reverence for the Deity, as expressed in the short extracts from these letters of Lord Byron's daughter, above all, the glimpse we catch of her enthusiastic feelings for her father, will be welcome now to all honest-minded people.—ED.]

IN the year 1841-2 Byron's daughter, Lady Lovelace, was a frequent visitor at Fyne Court, Broomfield, in Somersetshire, the seat of the late Mr. Andrew Crosse, whose name is so well known for his researches in the science of Electricity. At that period Mr. Crosse was carrying on some very interesting experiments on Electro-crystallization, and in the course of these processes he met with animal life under very extraordinary conditions. Insects appeared in a caustic solution subject to electric action. It is not our purpose now to enter upon this matter from a scientific point of view, but the whole question interested Lady Lovelace exceedingly, and led to an interchange of visits between Mr. Crosse and herself. A correspondence was maintained for some time between them, which affords glimpses of her character, and of the very unusual nature of her intellectual pursuits. Lady Lovelace was not poetical, but her mental powers, which were of a very high order, were entirely devoted to abstract reasoning and experimental science. She once observed to Mr. Crosse, "Our family are an alternate stratification of poetry and mathematics."

A few extracts from a very interesting series of letters may be acceptable at the present time.*

The late Mr. Crosse told the writer of this paper that during all his intercourse with Lady Lovelace she only once mentioned her father, but on that occasion she spoke of him with rapturous admiration—the subject seemed to excite her intensely, and she burst out into expres-

* The letters are in the possession of the writer of this article.

sions of *passionate affection* for his memory, and enthusiastic praise of his genius.

Most of the letters are dated from Ashley Combe, a marine residence which Lord Lovelace possesses, overlooking the romantic and beautiful Porlock Bay, in West Somersetshire.

“ Dear Mr. Crosse,—I think I may as well send you the enclosed documents at once . . . I am anxious that *we should try the experiments* mentioned; and you may require a little preparation possibly for the purpose. (One of these experiments was on sound, produced in a bar of iron by electro-magnetism) . . . The letter in the large handwriting is an account of an experiment with the muscles of frogs, which I hope we may manage; but I should think it required delicate manipulation: . . . I am anxious to consult you about the most convenient and manageable and portable forms for obtaining constantly acting batteries; not great intensity, but continual and uninterrupted action. Some of my own views make it necessary for me to use electricity as my prime-minister, in order to test certain points experimentally as to the nature and *putting together (con-sti-tu-tion)* of the molecules of matter. . . . By eventually bringing high *analysis* to bear on my experimental studies I hope one day to do much. . . . —Ever yours,

“ AUGUSTA ADA LOVELACE.”

“ My Dear Mr. Crosse,— . . . Pray don't forget to send me with the other things the accounts of the *old* experiments. All is as usual here; I play as much (on the harp) perhaps more than ever, and I really do get on gloriously. You know that I believe no creature ever could *WILL* things like a *Byron*. And perhaps that is at the bottom of the genius-like tendencies in my family. We can throw our *whole life* and *existence* for the time being into whatever we *will* to do and accomplish. You know perhaps the family motto, “ *Crede Byron*.” I think not inappropriate, and especially when united with that of the Kings, “ *Labor ipse voluptas*.” Now as I have married that motto, both *literally* and in my whole ideas and nature, I mean to do *what I mean to do*.—In some haste, yours ever,

“ A. A. L.”

“ My Dear Mr. Crosse,— . . . I have sent a copy of the paper I lately published in ‘ Taylor's Scientific Memoirs.’ . . . Circumstances have been such, that I have lived almost entirely secluded for some time. Those who are much in *earnest* and with *single minds* devoted to any great object in life, must find this occasionally inevitable. . . . You will wonder at having heard nothing from me; but you have experience and candour enough to perceive and know that God has not given to us (in *this* state of existence) more

than very limited powers of expression of one's ideas and feelings. Could you come to us on Saturday week for a few days? . . . I shall be very desirous of again seeing you. You know what that means from me, and that it is no *form*, but the simple expression and result of the respect and attraction I feel for a mind that ventures to read *direct* in *God's own book*, and not merely thro' man's translation of that same vast and mighty work.—Yours ever,

“A. A. LOVELACE.”

“Dear Mr. Crosse,—Thank you for your kind and cordial letter. . . . On Monday the 18th then, we expect you, and on Wednesday 20th we will all go to Broomfield. Perhaps you have felt already, from the tone of my letter, that I am more than ever now the bride of science. Religion to me is science, and science is religion. In that deeply-felt truth lies the secret of my intense devotion to the reading of God's natural works. It is reading Him, His will—His intelligence; and this again is learning to obey and to follow (to the best of our power) that will! For he who reads, who *interprets* the Divinity with a true and simple heart, then obeys and submits in acts and feelings as by an impulse and instinct. He can't help doing so. At least, it appears so to me. And when I behold the scientific and so-called philosophers full of selfish feelings, and of a tendency to war against circumstances and Providence, I say to myself: *They* are not true priests, *they* are but half prophets—if not absolutely false ones. They have read the great page simply with the physical eye, and with none of the spirit *within*. The intellectual, the moral, the religious seem to me all naturally bound up and interlinked together in one great and harmonious whole. . . . That God is one, and that all the works and the feelings He has called into existence are ONE; this is a truth (a biblical and scriptural truth too) not in my opinion developed to the apprehension of most people in its really deep and unfathomable meaning. There is too much tendency to making *separate* and *independent bundles* of both the physical and the moral facts of the universe. Whereas, all and everything is naturally related and interconnected. A volume could I write you on this subject. . . . I think I may as well just give you a hint that I am subject at times to dreadful physical sufferings. If such should come over me at Broomfield, I may have to keep my room for a time. In that case all I require is to be *let alone*. . . . With all my wiry power and strength, I am prone at times to bodily sufferings, connected chiefly with the digestive organs, of no common degree or kind. . . . I do not regret the sufferings and peculiarities of my physical constitution. They have taught me, and continue to teach me, that which I think nothing else could have developed. It is a force and control put upon me by Providence, which I *must* obey. And the effects of this continual

discipline of facts are mighty. They *tame* in the best sense of that word, and they *fan* into existence a pure, bright, holy, unselfish flame within that sheds cheerfulness and light on many.—Ever yours truly,

“A. A. LOVELACE.”

“My Dear Mr. Crosse,—I have been somewhat *tardy* in replying to your last interesting letter. . . . At present I am in a very musical phase (which you will not be sorry to hear), and I am giving a good deal of time to it. Your account and diagrams of the apparatus seem promising. . . . I quite agree with you that your best and wisest refuge from all troubles is in your science. *That* is a great soother of agitated feelings, and in this respect you are indeed a fortunate person. I generally see indeed that there is compensation of some kind or other, in all situations, and I think lots are *very even* in this world on the whole. . . . —Ever, very sincerely yours,

“A. A. LOVELACE.”

The next letter was written immediately after a visit to Broomfield, and makes playful allusion to the philosopher's arrangements :—

“My Dear Mr. Crosse,—I found my gold pencil this morning in the pocket of the gown I wore on Tuesday evening. I believe I had put it there to *prevent* losing it, as I went up to bed that night. My journey was very wretched—so cold, so late, so dreary. I could not help lending my cloak to a lady who was my companion, and who seemed to me more delicate and in need of it than myself. This did not, however, add to my own physical comfort. Many times after it became dusk did I think of your hospitable ‘chaos,’ and wish myself back, and imagine to myself if you were all sitting down to dinner, and if you missed me at all or not. In short, I had in my own brain a very comical chaos composed of what I had left behind, and a thousand heterogeneous ideas, all of them but half alive and stagnant through physical cold. . . . I have no time to say more, nor indeed, have I anything particular to say as yet. My gold pin does not come forth—but it is not a thing of much consequence. If a stray gold pin, however, does develop itself, don't fancy it is an *electrical* production, but send it to me. My kind recollections to the various heterogeneous atoms (organic and inorganic) of your chaotic mass.—Yours ever,

“A. A. L.”

Increasing ill-health, and, alas, early death, closed a career which had opened with great intellectual promise. *Crede Byron.*

THE GAME FINISHED.

THE ting-tang of the district church was ringing out fiercely for the daily morning service, and Miss Cattledon was picking her way across the road to attend it, with her thin white legs and a water-proof cloak on. It had rained in the night, but the clouds were breaking, promising a fine day. I stood at the window, watching the legs and the pools of water; Miss Deveen sat at the table behind, answering a letter that had come to her by the morning's post.

"Have you ever thought mine a peculiar name, Johnny?" she suddenly asked.

"No," I said, turning round to answer her. "I think it a pretty one."

"It was originally French: *De Vigne*: but like many other things has been corrupted with time, and made into what it is. Is that ten o'clock striking?"

Yes: and the ting-tang was ceasing. Miss Cattledon would be late. It was a regular penalty to her I knew to go out so early, and quite a new whim, begun in the middle of Lent. She talked a little in her vinegar way at the world's wickedness in not spending some of its working hours inside a church, listening to that delightful curate with the mild voice, whose hair had turned grey prematurely. Miss Deveen, knowing it was meant for her, laughed pleasantly, and said if the many years' prayers from her chamber had not been heard as well as though she had gone into a church to offer them up, she should be in a poor condition now. I went with Miss Cattledon one Monday morning out of politeness. There were nine-and-twenty in the pews, for I counted them: eight-and-twenty being single ladies (to go by the look) from twenty years old upwards. The grey-haired curate was assisted by a young deacon, who had a black beard and a lisp and his hair parted down the middle. It was very edifying, especially the ten minutes' gossip with the two clergymen coming out, when we all congregated in the aisle by the door.

"My great grandfather was a grand old proprietor in France, Johnny; a baron," continued Miss Deveen. "I don't think I have much of the French nature left in me."

"I suppose you speak French well, Miss Deveen?"

"Not a word of it, Johnny. They pretended to teach it me when I was a child, but I'm afraid I was unusually stupid. Why, who can this be?"

She alluded to a ring at the visitors' bell. One of the servants came in and said that the gentleman who had called once or twice before had come again.

Miss Deveen looked up, first at the servant, then at me. She seemed to be considering.

"I will see him in two or three minutes, George"—and the man shut the door.

"Johnny," she said, "I have taken you partly into my confidence in this affair of the lost studs; I think I will tell you a little more. After I sent for Lettice Lane here—and my impression, as I told you, was very strong in favour of her innocence—it occurred to me that I ought to see if anything could be done to prove it; or at least set the matter at rest, one way or the other, instead of leaving it to time and chance. The question was, how could I do it? I did not like to apply to the police, lest more might have been made of it than I wished. One day a friend of mine, to whom I was relating the circumstances, solved the difficulty. He said he would send to me some one with whom he was well acquainted, a Mr. Bond, who had once been connected with the detective police, and who had got his dismissal through an affair he was thought to have mismanaged. It sounded rather formidable to my old ears, 'once connected with the detective police'; but I consented, and Mr. Bond came. He has had the thing in hand since last February."

"And what has he found out?"

"Nothing, Johnny. Unless he has come to tell me now that he has—for it is he who is waiting. I think it may be so, as he has called so early. First of all he was following up the matter down in Worcestershire, because the notion he entertained was, that the studs must have been taken by some of the Whitneys' servants. He stayed in the neighbourhood, pursuing his inquiries as to their characters and habits, and visiting all the pawnbrokers' shops that he thought were at available distances.

"Did he think it was Lettice Lane?"

"He *said* he did not: but he took care (as I happen to know) to worm out all he could of Lettice's antecedents while he was inquiring about the rest. I had the girl into this room at his first visit, not alarming her, simply saying that I was relating the history of the studs' disappearance to this friend who had called, and desired her to describe her share in it to make the story complete. Lettice suspected nothing; she told the tale simply and naturally, devoid of fear: and from that very moment, Johnny, I have felt certain in my own mind that the girl is as innocent as I am. Mr. Bond '*thought* she might be,' but he would not go beyond that; for women, he said, were crafty, and knew how to make one think black was white."

"Miss Deveen, suppose, after all, it should turn out to have been Lettice? Should you proceed against her?"

"I shall not proceed against any one, Johnny; and I shall hush the matter up if I can," she answered, ringing for Mr. Bond to be shown in.

I was curious to see him also; ideas floating through my brain of

cocked-hats and blue uniform and Sir Richard Mayne. Mr. Bond turned out to be a very inoffensive-looking individual indeed; a little man, wearing steel spectacles, in a black frock-coat and grey trousers.

"When I last saw you, madam," he began, after he was seated, and Miss Deveen had told him he might speak before me, "I mentioned that I had abandoned my search in the country, and intended to prosecute my inquiries in London."

"You did, Mr. Bond."

"That the theft lay amid Sir John Whitney's female servants, I have thought likely all along," continued Mr. Bond. "If the purloiner felt afraid to dispose of the emeralds after taking them—and I could find no trace of them in the country—the probability was that she would keep them secreted about her, and get rid of them as soon as she came to London, if she were one of the maids brought up by Lady Whitney. There were two I thought in particular might have done it: one was the lady's-maid; the other, the upper-housemaid, who had been ill the night of their disappearance. All kinds of ruses are played off in the pursuit of plunder, as we have cause to learn every day; and it struck me the housemaid might have feigned illness, the better to cover her actions and throw suspicion off herself. I am bound to say I could not learn anything against either of these two young women; but their business took them about the rooms at Whitney Hall; and an open jewel-case is a great temptation."

"It is," assented Miss Deveen. "That carelessness lay at my door, and therefore I determined never to prosecute in this case; never, in fact, to bring the offender to open shame of any sort in regard to it."

"And that has served to increase the difficulty," remarked Mr. Bond. "Could the women have been searched and their private places at Whitney Hall turned out, we might or might not have found the emeralds; but—"

"I'd not have had it done for the Lord Chancellor, sir," hotly interrupted Miss Deveen. "One was searched, and that was quite enough for me, for I believe her to be innocent. If you can get at the right person for me quietly, Mr. Bond, for my own satisfaction, well and good. My instructions went so far, but no farther."

Mr. Bond took off his spectacles to ease his face for a minute, and put them on again. "I understood this perfectly when I took the business in hand," he quietly said. "Well, madam, to go on. Lady Whitney brought her servants to London, and I came up also. Last night I gleaned a little light."

He paused, and put his hand into his pocket. I looked, and Miss Deveen looked.

"Should you know the studs again?" he asked her.

"You may as well ask me if I should know my own face in the glass, Mr. Bond. Of course I should."

Mr. Bond opened a pill-box: three green studs lay in it on white cotton. He held it out to Miss Deveen.

"Are these they?"

"No, certainly not," replied Miss Deveen, speaking like one in frightful disappointment. "*Those* are not to be compared to mine, sir."

Mr. Bond put the bit of top cotton on, and the lid on that, and returned them to his pocket. Out came another box then, long and thin.

"These are my studs," quickly exclaimed Miss Deveen, before she had given more than a glance. "You can look for yourself to the private marks I told you of, Mr. Bond."

Three brilliant emeralds, that seemed to set the room alight, connected together on the inner side by a fine chain of gold. At either end the chain was finished off by a small thin square plate of gold, on one of which was an engraved crest, on the other Miss Deveen's initials. Inform the emeralds looked like buttons more than studs.

"I never knew they were linked together, Miss Deveen," I exclaimed in surprise.

"Did you not, Johnny?"

Never. My mind had always pictured them as three loose studs. Mr. Bond, who no doubt had the marks by heart before he brought them up, began shutting them into the box as he had the others.

"Anticipating from the first that the studs would most probably be found at a pawnbroker's, if found at all, I ventured to speak to you then of a difficulty that might attend the finding," said he to Miss Deveen. "Unless a thing can be proved by law to have been stolen, a pawnbroker cannot be forced to give it up. And I am under an engagement to return these studs to the pawnbroker whence I have brought them, in the course of the morning."

"You may do so," said Miss Deveen. "I dare say he and I can come to an amicable arrangement in regard to giving them up later. My object has been to discover who stole them, not to bring trouble or loss upon pawnbrokers. How did you discover them, Mr. Bond?"

"In rather a singular manner. Last evening, in making my way from Regent Street to a place where I had to go on business, I saw a young woman turn out of a pawnbroker's shop, whose shutters were put up, but its doors open. Her face struck me as being familiar; and I remembered her as Lady Whitney's housemaid—the same who had been ill in bed, or pretended to be, the night the studs were lost. Ah, ha, I thought, some discovery may be looming. I have some acquaintance with the proprietor of the shop; a very respectable man indeed, who has got on by dint of hard, honest work, and is a jeweller now as well as a pawnbroker. My own business could wait, and I went in and found him busy with accounts in his private room. He thought at first I

had but called in to see him in passing. I gave him no particulars; but said I fancied a person in whom I was interested professionally, had just been leaving some emerald studs in his shop."

"What is the pawnbroker's name?" interrupted Miss Deveen.

"James. He went to inquire, and came back, saying that his assistant denied it. There was only one man in the shop: the other had gone. He, this assistant, said that no person had been in during the last half hour, except a young woman, a cousin of his wife's; who did not come to pledge anything but simply to say how d'ye do, and to ask where they were living now, that she might call and see his wife. James added that the man said she occupied a good situation in the family of Sir John and Lady Whitney, and was not likely to require to pledge anything. Plausible enough, this, you see, Miss Deveen, but the coincidence was singular. I then told James that I had been in search for these two months of some emerald studs lost out of Sir John Whitney's house. He stared a little at this, and asked whether they were of unusual value and very beautiful. Just so, I said, and described them minutely. Mr. James, without another word, went away and brought the studs in. Your studs, Miss Deveen."

"And how did he come by them?"

"He won't tell me much about it—except that they took in the goods some weeks ago in the ordinary course of business. The fact is, he is vexed: for they have really been careful and have managed to avoid these unpleasant episodes, to which all pawnbrokers are liable. It was with difficulty I could get him to let me bring them up here: and that only on the condition that they should be in his hands again before the clock struck twelve."

"You shall keep faith with him. But now, Mr. Bond, what is your opinion of this?"

"My opinion is that that same young woman stole the studs: and that she contrived to get them conveyed to London to this assistant, her relative, who no doubt advanced money upon them. I cannot see my way to any other conclusion, under the circumstances," continued Mr. Bond, firmly. "But for James's turning crusty, I might have learned more."

"I will go to him myself," said Miss Deveen, with sudden resolution. "When he finds that my intention is to hold his pocket harmless and make no fuss in any way, he will not be crusty with me. But this matter must be cleared up if it be possible to clear it."

Miss Deveen was not one to be slow of action, once any resolve was taken. Mr. Bond made no attempt to oppose her: on the contrary, he seemed to think it might be well that she did go. She sent George out for a street cab, and said I might accompany her. We were off long before Miss Cattledon's conference with the curates inside the church was over.

The shop was not in Regent Street, but not a great way from it. I inquired for Mr. James at the private door, and he came out to the cab. Miss Deveen said she had come to speak to him on particular business, and he took us upstairs to a handsomely furnished room. He was a well-dressed, portly, good-looking man, with a pleasant face and quietly easy manners. Miss Deveen, bidding him sit down near her, explained the affair in a few words, and asked him to *help* her elucidate it. He responded to her frankness at once, and said he would willingly give all the aid in his power.

"Singular to say, I took these studs in myself," he observed. "I never do these things now, but my foreman had a holiday that day to attend a funeral, and I was in the shop. They were pledged on the 27th of January: since Mr. Bond left this morning I have been referring to my books."

The 27th of January. It was on the night of the 23rd that the studs disappeared. Then the thief had not lost much time! I said so.

"Stay a minute, Johnny," cried Miss Deveen: "you young ones sum up things] too quickly for me. Let me trace events back. The studs, as you say, were lost on the 23rd; the loss was discovered on the 24th, and Lettice Lane discharged; on the 25th those of us staying at Whitney Hall began to talk of leaving; and on the 26th you two went home after seeing Miss Chalk off by rail to London."

"And Mrs. Hughes too. They went up together."

"Who is Mrs. Hughes?" asked Miss Deveen.

"Don't you remember?—that young married lady who came to the dance with the Featherstons. She lives somewhere in London."

Miss Deveen stared a little. "I don't remember any Mrs. Hughes, Johnny."

"But, dear Miss Deveen, you must remember her," I persisted. "She was very young-looking, as little as Sophie Chalk; Harry Whitney, dancing with her, trod off the tail of her thin pink dress. I heard old Featherston telling you about Mrs. Hughes, saying it was a sad history. Her husband lost his money after they were married, and had been obliged to take a small situation."

Recollection flashed over Miss Deveen. "Yes, I remember now. A pale, lady-like little woman with a sad face. But let us go back to business. You all left on the 26th; I and Miss Cattledon on the 27th. Now, while the visitors were at the Hall, I don't think the upper housemaid could have got time to go out and send off the studs by rail. Still less could she have come up herself to pledge them."

Miss Deveen's head was running on Mr. Bond's theory.

"It was no housemaid that pledged the studs," spoke Mr. James.

"I was about to say, Mr. James, that if you took them in yourself over the counter, they could not have been sent up to your assistant."

"All the people about me are trustworthy, I can assure you, ma'am,"

he interrupted. "They would not lend themselves to such a thing. It was a lady who pledged those studs."

"A lady?"

"Yes, ma'am, a lady. And to tell the truth, if I may dare to say it, the description you have now given of a lady just tallies with her."

"Mrs. Hughes?"

"It seems so to me," continued Mr. James. "Little, pale, and lady-like: that was just her."

"Dear me!" cried Miss Deveen, letting her hands drop on her lap as if they were lead. "You had better tell me as much as you can recollect, please."

"It was at dusk," said Mr. James. "Not quite dark, but the lamps were lighted in the streets and the gas indoors: just the hour, ma'am, that gentlefolks choose for bringing their things. I happened to be standing near the door, when a lady came into the shop and asked to see the principal. I said I was he, and retired behind the counter. She brought out these emerald studs"—touching the box—"and said she wanted to sell them, or else pledge them for their utmost value. She told me a tale, in apparent confidence, of a brother who had fallen into debt at college, and she was trying to get together some money to help him, or frightful trouble might come of it. If it was not genuine," broke off Mr. James, "she was the best actor I ever saw in all my life."

"Please go on."

"I saw the emeralds were very rare and beautiful. She said they were an heirloom from her mother, who had brought the stones from India and had them linked together in England. I told her I could not buy; she rejoined that it might be better only to pledge, for they would not be entirely lost to her and she might redeem them ere twelve months were past if I would keep them as long as that. I explained that the law exacted it. The name she gave was Mary Drake, asking if I had ever heard of a famous old forefather of theirs, Admiral Drake. The name answers to the initials on the gold."

"'M. D.' They were engraved for Margaret Deveen. Perhaps she claimed the crest also, Mr. James," added that lady, sarcastically.

"She did, ma'am; in so far as that she said it was the crest of the Drake family."

"And you call her a lady!"

"She had every appearance of one, in tone and language too. Her hand—she took one of her gloves off when showing the studs—was a lady's hand; small, delicate, and white as alabaster. Ma'am, rely upon it, though she may not be a lady in deeds, she must be living the life of one."

"But now, who can it have been?"

Yes, who could it have been? Miss Deveen seemed to wait for an answer, but she did not get one.

"How much did you lend upon the studs?"

"Ten pounds."

"Should you know her again? How was she dressed?"

"She wore an ordinary Paisley shawl; it was cold weather; and had a thick black veil over her face, which she never lifted."

"Should not that have excited your suspicion?" interrupted Miss Deveen. "I don't like people who keep their veils down while they talk to you."

The pawnbroker smiled. "Most ladies keep them down when they come here. As to knowing her again, I am quite certain that I should; and her voice too. Whoever she was, she went about it very systematically, and took me in completely. Her asking for the principal may have thrown me somewhat off my guard."

We came away, leaving the studs with Mr. James: the time had not arrived for Miss Deveen to redeem them. She seemed very thoughtful as we went along in the cab.

"Johnny," she said, breaking the silence, "we talk lightly enough about the finger of Providence; but I don't know what else it can be that has led on this discovery so far. Out of the hundreds of pawnbroking establishments scattered about the metropolis, it is wonderfully strange that this should have been the one the studs were taken to; and furthermore, that Bond should have been passing it last night at the moment Lady Whitney's housemaid came forth. Had the studs been pledged elsewhere, we might never have heard of them; neither, as it is, but for the housemaid's being connected with Mr. James's assistant."

Of course it was strange.

"You were surprised to see the studs connected together, Johnny. That was the point I mentioned about Lettice Lane. 'One might have fallen down,' she sobbed out, in leaving Whitney Hall; 'even two; but it's beyond the bounds of probability that three should, ma'am.' She was thinking of the studs as separate studs, and it convinced me that she had never seen them. But now, Johnny, we must consider what steps to take next. I shall not rest until the matter is cleared."

"Suppose it should never get on any further!"

"Suppose you are like a young bear, all your experience to come?" retorted Miss Deveen. "Why, Johnny Ludlow, do you think that when that Finger I ventured to speak of is directing a course of events onwards, that it halts midway? There cannot, I fear, be much doubt as to the thief; but we must get proof."

"You think it was——"

"Mrs. Hughes. How can I think anything else? She is very nice, and I could not have believed it of her. I suppose the sight of the jewels, combined with her state of poverty, must have proved the temptation. I shall get back the emeralds, but we must screen her."

"Miss Deveen, I don't believe it was Mrs. Hughes."

"Not believe it!"

"No. Her face is not that of one who would do such a thing. You might trust it anywhere."

"Oh, Johnny! there you are at your faces again!"

"Well, I never was deceived in one yet."

"If she did not take the studs, and bring them to London, and pledge them, who else could it have been?"

"That's the puzzle of it."

"We must find out where she lives, and then try and bring her within sight of Mr. James."

"The Whitneys know where she lives. I heard Anna say she and Helen had been to call upon her."

"Then our way is pretty plain. Mind you don't breathe a syllable of this to mortal ear, Johnny. It might defeat ends. Miss Cattledon, always inquisitive, will question where we have been with her curious eyes; but for once she will not get satisfied."

"I wonder you keep her, Miss Deveen. I shouldn't."

"Yes you would, Johnny. She is faithful; she suits me very well; and her mother and I were girls together."

It was a sight to be painted. Helen Whitney standing there in her presentation dress. Oh, but she looked well. It was all white, with a tail behind longer than three peacocks', lace and feathers hanging from her hair. The whole lot of us were round her; the young ones had come from the nursery, the servants peeped in at the door; Miss Cattledon had her eye-glass up, and Miss Deveen put on her spectacles.

"Helen, my dear, I admire all very much except your necklace and bracelets," said Miss Deveen, critically. "They do not match."

The necklace was a row of turquoise beads, it did not look much; the bracelets were gold with blue stones in the clasps. The Whitney family did not shine in jewels, and the few diamonds they possessed were on Lady Whitney to-day.

"But I had nothing else, Miss Deveen," said Helen, simply. "Mamma said these must do."

Miss Deveen took off the string of blue beads as if to examine them, and left in its place the most beautiful pearl necklace ever seen. There was a scream of surprise; some of us had only met with such transformations in fairy tales.

"And these are the bracelets to match, my dear. Anna, I shall give you the same when your turn for presentation comes."

Anna smiled faintly as she looked her thanks. She always seemed regularly down in spirits now, not to be raised by pearl necklaces. For the first time her sad countenance seemed to strike Tod. He came crossing over.

"What is amiss, Anna?" he whispered. "Are you not well?"

"Quite well, thank you," she answered, her cheeks going off to a fine red.

At this moment Sophie Chalk created a diversion. Unable to restrain her feelings longer, she burst into tears, knelt down outside Helen's dress, and began kissing her hand and its pearl bracelet in a transport of glad joy.

"Oh, Helen, my dear friend, how rejoiced I am! I said upstairs that your ornaments were not worthy of you."

Tod's eyes were glued to her. Bill Whitney called out Bravo. Sophie kneeling before Helen in her Court furbelows, made a charming tableau.

"It is good acting, Tod," I said in his ear.

He turned sharply. But instead of cuffing me into next week, he just sent his eyes straight out to mine.

"Do you call it acting?"

"I am sure it is. But not for you."

"You are bold, Mr. Johnny."

But I could tell, by the tone and the subdued manner, that his own doubts had been at last awakened whether or not it *was* acting.

Lady Whitney came sailing down the stairs, a blaze of yellow satin, her face like a crimson peony with flurry. She could hardly say a word of thanks for the present of pearls, for her wits were gone a wool-gathering. When she was last at Court herself, Bill was a baby in long-clothes. We went out with them to the carriage, the lot of us; the lady's maid taking at least six minutes to settle the trains: and Bill said he hoped the eyes at the windows all round enjoyed the show. The postillion—an unusual sight in London—and the two men behind wore their state liveries of white and crimson; the bouquets in their breasts being bigger than full-blown cauliflowers.

"You will dance with me the first dance to-night?" Tod whispered to Sophie Chalk as they were going in, after watching the carriage away.

A slight pause, as if for consideration before she answered, and I saw her eyes wander out the distance towards Bill Whitney.

"Oh, thank you," she said, with a great display of gratitude. "But I am engaged."

"Engaged for the first dance?"

"Yes. I am so sorry."

"The second then?"

"With the greatest pleasure."

Anna heard it all as well as I. Tod gave Sophie's hand a squeeze as if to close the bargain, and went away whistling.

Not being in the world of fashion, we did not know how other people finished up drawing-room days (and when Helen Whitney went to Court they *were* drawing-rooms), but the Whitneys' programme was this: A

cold collation in lieu of a dinner, when Fate should bring them home again out of the ruck, and a ball in the evening. The ball was our joint invention. Sitting round the school-room fire one night we settled it for ourselves: and after Sir John and my lady had stood out well, they gave in. Not that it would be much of a ball, for they had but few acquaintances in London, and the house was small.

But now, had anything been wanting by Miss Deveen to carry out her plans, she could not have devised better than this. For the Whitneys invited (all unconsciously) Mrs. Hughes to the ball. Anna came in to Miss Deveen's after they had been sending out the invitations (only three days before the evening) and began telling her the names as a slice of gossip. She came to Mrs. Hughes. "Mrs. Hughes," interrupted Miss Deveen, "I am glad of that, Anna, for I want to see her."

Miss Deveen's seeing her would not go for much in the matter of elucidation; it was Mr. James who must see her; and the plan by which he might do so was entirely Miss Deveen's own. She went down and arranged it with him, and before the right night came, it was all cut and dried. He and she and I knew of it; not another soul in the world.

"You will have to help me in it a little, Johnny," she said. "Be at hand to look out for Mr. James's arrival, and bring him up to me."

We saw them come back from the drawing-room between five and six, Helen with a bright colour in her cheeks; and at eight o'clock we went in. London parties, which begin when you ought to be in your first sleep, are not understood by us country people, and eight was the hour named in the Whitneys' invitations. Cattledon was screwed into a rich sea-green satin (somebody else's once) with a water-lily in her thin hair; and Miss Deveen wore all her diamonds. Sir John, out of his element and frightfully disconsolate, stood against the wall, his spectacles lodged on his old red nose. The thing was not in his line. Miss Deveen went up to shake hands.

"Sir John, I am rather expecting a gentleman to call on me on business to-night," she said; "and have left word for him to step in and see me here, should he come. Will you pardon the liberty?"

"I'm sure it's no liberty; I shall be glad to welcome him," replied Sir John, dismally. "There'll be not much here but stupid boys and girls. We shall get no whist to-night. The plague only knows who invented balls."

It was a little odd that, next to us, Mrs. Hughes should be the first to arrive. She was very pale and pretty, and her husband was a slender, quiet, delicate man, looking like a finished gentleman. Miss Deveen followed them with her eyes as they went up to Lady Whitney.

"She does not look like it, does she, Johnny?" whispered Miss Deveen. No, I was quite sure she did not.

Sophie Chalk was in white, with ivy leaves in her spangled hair, the

sweetest fairy (to look at) ever seen out of a moonlight ring. Helen, in her Court-dress and pearls, looked plain beside her. They stood talking together, not noticing that I and Tod were in the recess behind. The people had mostly come then, and the music was throwing out fits and starts. The rooms looked well; the flowers, scattered about them, had come up from Whitney Hall. Helen called to her brother.

"We may as well begin dancing, William."

"Of course we may," he answered. "I don't know what we have waited for. I must get a partner. Miss Chalk, may I have the honour of dancing the first dance with you?"

That Miss Chalk's eyes went up to his with a flash of gratitude, and then down in modesty to the chalked floor, I knew as well as though they had been behind her head instead of before. "Oh, thank you," said she, "I shall be so happy." And I no more dared glance at Tod than if he had been a springing crocodile. She had told *him* she was engaged for it.

But just as William was about to give her his arm, and somebody came and took away Helen, Lady Whitney called him. He spoke with his mother for a minute or two and came back with a cloud on his face.

"I'm awfully sorry, Sophie. The mother says I must take out Lady Esther Starr this first time, old Starr's wife, you know, as my father's dancing days are over. Lady Esther is seven-and-thirty if she's a day," growled Bill, "and as big as a light-house. I'll have the second with you, Sophie."

"I am afraid I am engaged for the second," hesitated Miss Sophie. "I think I promised Joseph Todhetley."

"Never mind him," said Bill. "You'll dance it with me, mind."

"I can tell him I mistook the dance," she softly suggested.

"Tell him anything. All right."

He wheeled round, and went up to Lady Esther, putting on his glove. Sophie Chalk moved away, and I took the courage to glance sideways at Tod.

His face was white as death: I think with passion. He stood with his arms folded, never moving throughout the whole of the quadrille, only looking out straight before him with a fixed stare. A waltz came next, for which they kept their partners. And Sophie Chalk had enjoyed the luck of sitting down all the time. When they were making ready for the second quadrille, Tod went up to her.

"This is our dance, Miss Chalk."

Well, she had got her stock of brass. She looked steadily in his face, assuring him that he was mistaken, and vowing through thick and thin that it was the *third* dance she had promised to him. While she was excusing herself, Bill came up to claim her. Tod put out his strong arm to ward him off.

"Stay a moment, Whitney," he said, with studied calmness, "let me have an understanding first with Miss Chalk. She can dance with you afterwards if she prefers to. Miss Chalk, *you know* that you promised yourself to me this morning for the second dance. I asked you for the first: you were engaged for that, you said, and would dance with me the second. There could be no mistake, on your side or on mine."

"Oh, but *indeed* I understood it to be the third, dear Mr. Todhetley," said she. "I am dreadfully sorry if it is my fault. I'll dance the third with you."

"I have not asked you for the third. Do as you please. If you throw me over for this second dance, I will never ask you for another again as long as I live."

Bill Whitney stood by, laughing; seeming to treat the whole as a good joke. Sophie Chalk looked at him appealingly.

"And you certainly promised *me*, Miss Chalk. Todhetley, it is a complication. You and I had better draw friendly lots."

Tod bit his lip nearly to bleeding. All the notice he took of Bill's speech was to turn his back upon him, and address Sophie.

"The decision lies with you alone, Miss Chalk. You have engaged yourself to him and to me: choose between us."

She put her hand within Bill's arm, and went away with him, leaving a little honied flattery for Tod. But Bill Whitney looked back curiously into Tod's white face, all his lightness gone: for the first time he seemed to realize that it was serious, nearly an affair of life or death. His handkerchief up, wiping his damp brow, Tod did not notice which way he was going, and ran against Anna.

"I beg your pardon, child," he said, with a start, as if waking out of a dream. "Will you go through this dance with me, Anna?"

Yes. He led her up to it; and they took their places opposite to Bill and Miss Chalk.

Mr. James was to arrive at half-past nine. I was waiting for him near the entrance door. He was punctual to time; and looked very well in his evening dress. I took him up to Miss Deveen: she made room for him on the sofa by her side, her diamonds glistening. He must have seen their value. Sir John had got his rubber then in the little breakfast-parlour: Miss Cattledon, old Starr, and another making it up for him. Wanting to see the play played out, I kept by the sofa.

This was not the dancing-room: but they came into it between the dances in couples, to march round in the cooler air. Mr. James looked and Miss Deveen looked; and I confess that whenever Mrs. Hughes passed us, I felt queer. Miss Deveen suddenly arrested her and kept her talking for a minute or two. Not a word bearing upon the secret subject said Mr. James. Once, when the room was clear and the measured tread could be heard to the tune of one of the best waltzes ever imagined by Strauss, Lady Whitney approached. Catching sight of the

strange gentleman by Miss Deveen, she supposed he had been brought by some of the guests, and came up to make his acquaintance.

"A friend of mine, dear Lady Whitney," said Miss Deveen.

Lady Whitney, never observing that no name was mentioned, shook hands at once with Mr. James in her homely country fashion. He stood up until she had moved away.

"Well?" said Miss Deveen to him, when the dancers were coming in again. "Is the lady here?"

"Yes."

I had expected him to say No, and could have struck him for destroying my faith in Mrs. Hughes. She was passing at the same moment.

"Do you see her now?" whispered Miss Deveen.

"Not now. She was at the door a moment ago."

"Not now!" exclaimed Miss Deveen, staring at Mrs. Hughes. "Is it not *that* lady?"

Mr. James sent his eyes in seven directions at once. "Which lady, ma'am?"

"The one who has just passed in black silk, with the simple white net quilling round the neck."

"Oh dear, no!" said Mr. James. "I never saw that lady in my life before. The lady, *the* lady, is dressed in white."

Miss Deveen looked at him, and I looked. *Here*, in the rooms, and yet not Mrs. Hughes!

"This is the one," he whispered, "coming in now."

The one, turning in at that particular instant, was Sophie Chalk. But others were before her and behind her. She was on Harry Whitney's arm.

"Why don't you dance, Miss Deveen?" asked bold Harry, halting before the sofa.

"Will you dance with me, Master Harry?"

"Of course I will. Glad to get you."

"Don't you tell fibs, young man. I might take you at your word, if I had my dancing shoes on."

Harry laughed. Sophie Chalk's blue eyes happened to rest on Mr. James's face: they took a puzzled expression, as if wondering where she had seen it. Mr. James rose and bowed to her. She must have recognized him then, for her features turned a livid white, in spite of the powder that covered them.

"Who is it, Johnny?" she whispered, in her confusion, loosing Harry's arm and coming behind.

"Well, you must ask that of Miss Deveen. He has come here to see her: something's up, I fancy, about those emerald studs."

Had it been to save my fortune, I could not have helped saying it. I saw it all as in a mirror. *She* it was who had taken them, and pledged

them afterwards. The same light flashed on Miss Deveen. She followed her with her severe face, her condemning eyes.

"Take care, Johnny!"

I was just in time to catch Sophie Chalk. She would have fallen on my shoulder. The room was in a commotion at once: a young lady had fainted. Fainted! What from? asked everybody. Oh, from the heat, of course. And no other clue was breathed.

Mr. James's mission was over. It had been successful. He made a bow to Lady Whitney, and withdrew.

Miss Deveen sent in for Sophie Chalk the next day, and they had it out together, shut up alone. Sophie's coolness was good for any amount of denial, but it failed here. And then she took the other course, and fell on her knees at Miss Deveen's feet, and told a pitiable story of being alone in the world, without money to dress herself, and the open jewel-casket in Miss Deveen's chamber (into which accident, not design, had really taken her) proving too much in the moment's temptation. Miss Deveen believed it; she told her the affair should never transpire beyond the two or three who already knew of it; that she would redeem the emeralds herself, and say nothing even to Lady Whitney; but, as a matter of course, Miss Chalk must close her acquaintance with Sir John's family.

And, singular to say, Sophie got a letter from somebody that same evening, inviting her to go out of town.

So, the quitting the Whitneys suddenly was smoothly accounted for; and Helen Whitney does not know the truth to this day.

What did Tod think? For that, I expect, is what you are all wanting to ask. That was another curious thing—that he and Bill Whitney should have come to an explanation before the ball was over. Bill went up to him, saying that had he supposed Tod could mean anything serious in his admiration of Sophie Chalk, he should never have gone in for it himself, even in idleness; and certainly would not continue to do so or spoil sport again.

"Thank you for telling me," answered Tod, with indifference. "You are quite welcome to go in for Sophie Chalk in any way you please. *I* have done with her."

"No," said Bill, "good girls must get scarcer than they are before I should go in seriously for Sophie Chalk. She's all very well to talk and laugh with, and she is uncommonly fascinating."

It was my turn to put in a word then. "As I told you, Bill, months ago, Sophie Chalk would fascinate the hair off your head, give her the chance."

Bill laughed. "Well she has had the chance, Johnny: but she has not done it."

Altogether Sophie, thanks to her own bad play, had fallen to a discount.

When Miss Deveen announced to the world that she had found her emerald studs (lost through an accident she discovered, and recovered in the same way) people were full of wonder at the chances and mistakes of life. Lettice Lane was cleared triumphantly. Miss Deveen sent her home for a week to shake hands with her friends and enemies, and then took her back as her own maid.

And the only person I said a syllable to was Anna. I knew it would be safe ; and I dare say you would have done the same in my place. But she stopped me at the middle of the first sentence.

"I have known it from the first, Johnny ; I was nearly as sure of it as sure could be : and it is that that has made me so miserable."

"Known it was Sophie Chalk ?"

"As good as known it. There was no proof, only suspicion. And I could not see whether I ought to speak of the suspicion even to mamma, or to keep it to myself. As things have turned out I am very thankful to have been silent."

"How was it, then ?"

"That night at Whitney Hall, after they had all come down from dressing, mamma sent me up to William's room with a message. As I was leaving it—it is at the end of the long corridor, you know—I saw some one peep cautiously out of Miss Cattledon's chamber, and then steal up the back stairs. It was Sophie Chalk. Later, when we were going to bed, and I was quite undressed, Helen, who was in bed, espied Sophie's comb and brush on the table—for she had dressed in our room because of the large glass—and told me to run in with them : she only slept in the next room. It was very cold. I knocked and entered so sharply that the door-bolt, a thin, creaky old thing, gave way. Of course I begged her pardon ; but she seemed to start up in a terrible fear as if I'd been a ghost. She had not touched her hair, but sat in a shawl, sewing at her stays ; and she let them drop on the carpet and threw a petticoat upon them. I thought nothing, Johnny ; nothing at all. But the next morning when the commotion arose that the studs were missing, I could not help recalling all this ; and I quite hated myself for thinking Sophie Chalk might have been taking them when she stole out of Miss Cattledon's room, and was sewing them later into her stays."

"You thought right, you see."

"Johnny, I am very sorry for her. I wish we could help her to some nice situation. Depend upon it, it will be a lesson : she will never so far forget herself again."

"She is quite able to take care of herself, Anna. Don't let it trouble you. I dare say she will marry Mr. Everyt."

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

HOW WE FELL AMONG THIEVES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PICTURES IN TYROL."

MODERN pilgrimages are strange anachronisms in these days, and men mostly hurry to their journey's end as rapidly as steam will carry them. Yet a certain lingering on the road, the loving study of its history and art, the little incidents of its daily changes and chances must have given its greatest charm to the old penitential life. Even a hairy shirt, and peas in his shoes, could hardly have spoilt the enjoyment of a sixteenth century muscular Christian piously walking his twenty miles a day, sleeping in wayside inns, supping often on charity, gossipping with the country people, and bringing a breath of fresh life into the little villages on hill or plain through which he passed.

We, on our way to Rome, had halted at Orvieto, and fresh from the dreary marshes of the Maremma, across which a keen east wind had been blowing towards us; fresh too from the old stately palaces and Duomo of Siena; were anxious to visit its rival cathedral, and so, passing on over another waste of country, to enter the territory of the Church.

We were pilgrims inasmuch as that we each carried our rosaries of little facts, carefully gathered some of them from old home-lessons, of poetry, of history, of art-study; and that every one told off a bead, sometimes gleefully, sometimes with solemnity befitting the hardness of its construction, sometimes almost mournfully as the scene of some pathetic story slipped past us and was gone. They were merry or learned rosaries as our mood changed with the changing scenes around us, but they were always full of interest to us. Trying to-day to re-string those beads into their old completeness, I find many are lost and some forgotten, and that somehow I have missed finding their old magic thread.

Purposing to enter the territories of the Holy Father by the road which passes Orvieto and Viterbo, and eschewing the more direct approach by rail from Florence, or steam transit to Civita Vecchia, we had received many lugubrious warnings as to probable dangers by the way, and it was not without some consideration that we had decided on facing the chances of the road, brigands included.

The morning was fairly over when we reached the little station in the plain of La Paglia, and the sun had begun to decline as we toiled up the steep ascent to Orvieto, where we had planned to sleep, in order to have full daylight during our journey across the "debateable ground," which, however, we had been assured was well kept by mounted *sbirri*,

always at hand to satisfy the most fearful of travellers. The town looked wonderfully picturesque, even somewhat imposing at a sufficiently respectful distance; as we wound up the ascent and began to distinguish between brown crumbling rocks and ruins, the picturesque aspect decidedly triumphed; there were high walls pierced with many a narrow loophole and crowned with towers; aged archways tottering to their fall; frowning pinnacles flung out by old volcanic seethings of the hidden fires below; natural bastions and escarpments impregnable as fortifications; gigantic earth-works and precipitous rocks. The greenness of Italian vegetation covered the lower slopes, and clung about it wherever there was soil enough for plant or tree to grow, but the great mass of rock and wall rose high above such surroundings, inexpressibly grand and solitary in its decay.

The crowning beauty and glory of Orvieto is its Duomo, a magic fabric of marbles incrusted with rare carvings, with mosaics rich in gold and colours, with statues and bronzes, and all the most gorgeous illustrations of grand Gothic art. It was the embodied expression of the faith of centuries in a great religious dogma, and as such, apart from its own intrinsic beauty, is full of interest and of wonder to modern eyes and thought. In the middle of the thirteenth century there dwelt at the old town of Bolsena, on the borders of its lake, a Bohemian priest, in whose spirit the power of evil had implanted a poisonous tendency to doubts and enquiry, prejudicial alike to his individual soul and the interests of the Church at large. This sceptic had even been led to deny the doctrine of the Real Presence, but during the celebration of the mass his incredulity was confuted, and his soul bowed in penitence by a holy miracle vouchsafed to his weak faith. The sacramental wafer bled at his touch, and contrite and believing, the poor priest hastened to obtain absolution for his deadly sin at the hands of Pope Urban IV., then resident at Orvieto. Here surely was an opportunity not to be neglected of strengthening the weak faith generally of Christendom, and of raising a fresh altar to the glory of God and the Church! So there were solemn processions and great thanksgivings; the Holy Father and his cardinals came forth to the bridge of Rio Chiaro, and received from the hands of the penitent priest the blessed relics, the vessels and coverings of the communion-table: and Urban, like his great Eastern prototype, summoned all the cunning artificers, and the workers in wood, and in bronze, and in marble, the princes, and those who had great possessions, that they should bring an offering.

Surely a fact to be remembered with honour, if not with self-abasement by us all, though in the matter of the miracle our incredulity may equal that of the unconverted Bohemian! For well nigh three hundred years the people brought their offerings, and the workmen were busy at their toil. For three hundred more it has stood an enduring memorial of their fervour and their rare power. Whether our clearer-sighted

faith has found for itself other illustration, we must not stay to consider here, but there was in very truth a spirit that was like an inspiration in some of these old workers which is often sorely lacking in our modern art. Urban IV. did not live to see even the commencement of this great undertaking. The first stone of the Duomo was laid by his successor, Nicholas IV., in 1290.

One might fill many pages with even a mere enumeration of its riches; the wonderful frescoes by Signorelli and Fra Angelico in the chapel of the Madonna, the colossal statues of the Apostles, the sculptured "Adoration of the Magi," "The Visitation," and "The Pietà," by Ippolito Scalza. The façade of this noble building is of such perfect and marvellous beauty that eye and mind are alike satisfied and enthralled; built of the golden-hued stones which delight the eye at Siena, these are even of a softer shade, contrasted as they are with alternate layers of black marble, after the favourite manner of Italian Gothic art; but these level lines are broken everywhere by utmost richness of ornament and quaint profusion of decoration, bronze statues and emblems, richly sculptured doorways, spiral columns covered with mosaic and all wealth of leaves and fruitage and graceful life; and like fair jewels set in the rough stone-work there shine out in glowing colours on a gold background the Story of the Virgin and the Baptism of Christ. The base of each of the broad pilasters of the façade is covered with bas-reliefs by many worthiest scholars of Nicolo Pisano; here in wonderful realistic imagery we may trace the History of Man, the Story of Our Lord, the Last Judgment, Heaven and Hell. Giovanni da Pisa had a forcible manner of depicting the torments of the lost, and an unlimited power of inventing monsters after the strange fashion of those days. But whoever has stood even for a few moments before the Duomo of Orvieto will carry away a memory of a divine art and completeness that nothing can ever destroy.

Our moments were grievously limited, for on entering the hotel, where we found an almost regal suite of rooms and a promise of abundant comfort, we were told that to reach Rome and consequently Orti in time on the morrow, it was necessary for us to proceed to Viterbo that night. So a voiturier was summoned to our councils; a quick-eyed swarthy Italian in a composite costume, half jockey, half bandit, to distinguish him from his fellow-citizens. They, good souls, stood round and stared with a lazy indifference and lack of interest eminently stoical. We examined a carriage, saw to the horses, and began to calculate time and distance; there were a dozen slouching figures leaning against the door-posts, resting in a dim enjoyment of their afternoon siesta; the men with high-pointed hats worn far down over their black half-closed eyes, and each wrapped in a heavy cloak with a green lining, the voluminous folds of which were thrown over the shoulder and

drawn across the mouth ; round their waists were broad sashes, and as we talked the restless fingers twitched nervously at dagger or stiletto resting in their folds. An Italian of Southern Italy is silent, and slow of movement, unless roused to sudden activity, except as to his hands, which quiver with vitality ; you may read his very soul in the gesticulations of his fingers. But these men were utterly inert till, as we talked further, we could see a restless glitter of the eyes, a sudden gleam of intelligence from beneath the shadow of the broad-brimmed sombrero, and that quick, indrawn breath which marks a suddenly aroused interest. Amongst the crowd were some big peasants from the Roman Campagna, clad in their picturesque sheep-skins—those last mementoes of the old classic days, when Pan was worshipped and shepherds piped to the nymphs under the Alban hills.

Our bargain being made—so much time to be consumed on the road, so many horses, so much luggage, so many scudi to be paid, so large a *bottiglia* for the driver—we made the most of what short hours there were to spare, and while the dinner was being prepared, hurried through the crooked, ill-paved streets to the Duomo. After eating a very good and very characteristic Italian dinner, in which the two national delicacies held a conspicuous place—a dainty preparation of brains and succulent vegetables fried in batter, and the ubiquitous little larks wrapped in winding-sheets of bacon and lying decorously draped, like Cæsar—we took a long leave of Orvieto, passed out under the old gateway and dashed merrily down the long zig-zags of the road up which we had toiled so wearily but a few hours before. Our spirits rose with the swiftness of the pace and the cooler evening air that blew over from the hills, and we thought with delight of the few hours' journey before us with a night of sound sleep at Viterbo to end the day. We had forgotten the brigands and our old forebodings ; even the man who had listened to our programme so quietly as he leaned against the door-post and whom we had seen stealthily moving away when the compact was made, with one glance at our driver from under his evil brows. Rome lay before us, and four gallant little horses were carrying us towards it at their very topmost speed.

The clocks were striking five as we left the town, and as we began the long gradual ascent that lay before us, when the little valley of La Paglia was crossed, the picture on which we looked back was one never to be forgotten. Orvieto, with its high rock, was visible from every turn of the road, proudly dominating the plain, one brown mass of old mediaeval barbarism, but as we mounted higher, suddenly above its walls rose the alabaster pinnacles of the Duomo, flushing and paling in the changing rays of the setting sun, a revelation of faith and immortal hope, in its perfect loveliness ; an angry cloud behind it threw it into yet stronger relief, and it glowed like a pure opal against the purple of the storm ; long shadows of tower and rock fell across the valley, and

the colours deepened and changed as the red, troubled sun died away behind the darkness, and a cold grey light settled down on us ; the air growing crisper, with a touch of frost about it, and the horses' hoofs ringing with a clearer sound against the stones. The summit of the long ascent once gained, we broke into a gallop, and turning our faces Rome-wards, lost sight of the old town. And now the route grew more and more dreary; the mellow light that beautifies even desert places was gone ; we were crossing a long stretch of open country where hardly a tree was to be seen; stunted brushwood formed the only cover, and not a human habitation was in sight. With the loneliness our remembrance of the dangers of the road returned, and we watched for any reassuring sign of *sbirri*, but not a vestige of one was to be descried. Suddenly a tall, silent figure sprang from behind a bush, and darted towards us, whether with the intent of gaining a foothold on the luggage, or merely of identifying us, and giving a preconcerted signal to his companions, we could not tell. He vanished into the twilight as rapidly as he had appeared, and our steady gallop was maintained unbroken till between seven and eight o'clock : we then slackened rein at the Italiaa frontier, and soon after reached Monte Fiascone, a village on the borders of the territory of the Church ; a small *buono mano* to the official, and we were hurrying on again through the darkness with twelve miles still to accomplish over the loneliest tract of country we had yet crossed, but just then with the light of a young moon to guide us.

Gradually, the weariness following a day even of pleasant excitement, stole over us, one after another we grew silent, and a quiet drowsiness settled over all ; we seemed to be galloping on through infinite space, through unknown countries ; strange faces mingling oddly in our disjointed thoughts, with some fancies of old bandit stories half forgotten, and turning up unbidden to the measured tune of the horses' feet : then a long delicious blank of soundest sleep : then a sudden cry, a violent jolt to the carriage, a wrench that flung it half over on its side, angry Italian maledictions, shouts from those outside, and—here, surely, were the brigands !

Not just yet : only a broken axle. Things might have been worse, we acknowledged, with rather grim faces ; and then we looked at each other and at our driver, for a suggestion as to our quickest way out of the dilemma, but none seemed forthcoming ; the man, indeed wrung his hands and tore his hair with an exaggeration of distress, and then stood calmly disconsolate, gazing at the moon. At this we lost patience, and bidding him unharness the horses, and tie them up behind the carriage to secure what shelter it might afford them, we poured our small quantity of wine down his throat, shook him out of his apathy, and ordered him to ride the fourth horse back to Monte Fiascone and obtain what assistance he might be able to find there. As for ourselves, we determined, come what might, not to separate from each

other, or our luggage ; and so, as patiently as we could, we waited the event.

The short-lived moonlight was over, and nothing broke the darkness, and profound quiet, but the faint light from a cigar, the gnawing of the hungry horses at the straw covering of the baggage, the rattling of their shabby harness, or the steady tramp of those of our party who acted as patrols. We decided that it would be too hazardous to burn a light in the carriage-lamps, and thus ourselves offer a mark to the country-side, for the idea was forcibly brought before us that the whole affair was a "plant," preconceived and cleverly carried out between our driver and some of his friends—the gentlemen in the cloaks with the green linings—and it may have possibly been with more of dread than of satisfaction that, after an hour of suspense, we saw lanterns flashing out of the darkness, and heard the tramp of feet hurriedly approaching. In another moment we were surrounded by a crowd of rough-looking peasants, who set to work to repair the damage with what small skill they possessed. There was a great amount of gesticulation, a vast expenditure of breath, and of apparent exertion ; but after all, the really heavy work fell to the English. The pole of the carriage was used as a lever, the wheel was replaced and fastened with what security was attainable, and the men were paid and dismissed. Some of our party mounted to their places, others walked by the side, and thus, at a discouraging pace, we marched solemnly towards Viterbo.

A quarter of a mile was achieved when a second crash left us hopelessly in ruins. The moon had altogether vanished, and cold, hungry, and disconsolate, we gazed woefully into each other's faces in the dim light, and wished for the day.

Once more we called a general council, once more the unfortunate beasts were picketed behind us, once more the dejected driver was ordered to ride to Monte Fiascone and bring back with him something on wheels—coach or cart—anything that would carry us and our luggage to our destination. For three or four long hours we were left, ruminating sadly on the good quarters we had rashly quitted at Orvieto, and on the beautiful supper that might have awaited us at Viterbo. At last the cold and hunger and ennui became so unendurable that even a bandit would have been a diversion ! At about three o'clock, wheels were heard breaking the monotonous silence. In due time we and our possessions were packed into a tolerably decent vehicle ; the old voiture was stacked at one side of the road, and the horses gladly stretched their cramped limbs and made the best of their way towards shelter.

When we did reach Viterbo we found it buried in deepest sleep, and refusing to have anything to do with us. It was a long time before we could enter its walls at all, and then we drove through silent streets, between rows of windows shuttered and barred, our wheels making a dismal echo, as though we had been burglars treacherously endeavour-

ing to creep into a quiet fortress which, secure in its strength, despised and ignored us. At the albergo they turned an utterly deaf ear to us, till wearied by our persistent knockings, a sleepy waiter condescended to admit us, and preceding us with one long flaring candle, ushered us into an immense, cavernous salon, unutterably bare, and cold, and cheerless.

After a great deal of persuasion we procured a little bread and wine—*vin du pays*—and a fire of logs on the open hearth, round which the gentlemen encamped, while the ladies, wrapping themselves up in any blankets they could find, gladly lay down in an adjoining room; and for an hour a delicious repose settled upon all. At six o'clock we were roused for breakfast, which was spread in the salon, and then the carriage being at the door, we prepared to depart. And now at last Fate had overtaken us: let those who have scoffed at stories of robbers realize what Nemesis awaits them at Viterbo! Our waiter, with a smile, presented his bill:—

"The Signori had slept—one Napoleon; had breakfasted—two Napoleons; had drunk a boteglia of *vin du pays*, which had been heated by the desire of the Signori—three Napoleons; they had been lighted to their apartments by a very long tallow candle—four Napoleons. The waiter would be happy at any time to welcome the Signorini again; meanwhile, there was the little bill, and he had the honour to wish them a fortunate journey."

We stormed, we expostulated, we demanded the padrone; he was absent. We utterly refused to submit to such extortion. The waiter smiled, and said: "There were the police, would the Signore wish to appeal?"

The facts of the case were but too apparent. Could any reasonable man doubt that the padrone was absent because it suited him to be so? that the waiter could confidently appeal to the police, because padrone, waiter, police, voiturier, peasants, priests, and people were all leagued together in the same gigantic scheme? Rampant ultramontanism was fattening on the helpless wretches a kind Providence might cast into St. Peter's net! We paid the money, being unwilling to lose our patience and the train from Ortì, and consoled ourselves with muttering Br-rigands (with a great many retributive r-r's) as we shook the dust of Viterbo from our horses' feet.

We were safely deposited in the train without further adventure, and steamed slowly towards Rome. The spring sunshine had coloured the fertile country with a promise of the coming summer; the trees were growing green, and buds were showing on the vines which hung in graceful festoons from the pollard willows. We were too sleepy to be keenly interested even in old Soracte or our first glimpse of the "yellow" Tibur—a turbid stream, winding through the valley below us. Leaving Ortì crowning its fortress-rock like an eagle's eyrie, we descended to the railway station and everyday life.

The rest of our journey was a strange medley of the commonplace and the poetic. There were the characteristic groups at the station—soldiers, officials, travellers, peasants going or returning from market, women selling food, hard-boiled eggs, curd cheese, and a flask of Monte Orvieto, with the one drop of oil for a stopper. There were many of the Papal Zouaves in their picturesque dress—bare-throated fellows, with great scarlet sashes, and grey uniforms picked out with red. As we neared Rome, our pace became yet slower, decorously shambling, as though it tried to adapt itself to the general want of energy observable in the territories of the Holy Father. Slowly we walked across the beautiful Campagna, on whose grassy undulations one saw only a few trees, here cattle grazing, there groups of young horses, and far away on the horizon a boundary-line of purple Alban and Sabine hills; before us rose the dome of St. Peter's against a clear evening sky; then we came upon a piece of an old aqueduct, and the church of Santa Maria Maggiore; then to a ticket station and the vaults of Diocletian, and we were in Rome at last, and were to drive in an omnibus through the eternal city!

As in the famous excuse of the artist to his irate patron who ventured to criticize his historical painting of the Passage of the Red Sea, that the Israelites were all gone over and the Egyptians were all drowned, which naturally robbed it of incident; it is possible to conclude that we did not actually encounter the bandits face to face, because at the moment that we were blocking up the Pope's highway, his faithful *sbirri* had chased them over the frontiers, and as both parties were doubtless feeding their horses and resting before a fresh stampede, we necessarily failed to make their acquaintance *except by deputy!*

With that last stage by omnibus our pilgrimage was over. And so, with one lingering look into the past, we let the bead fall back upon its string.



AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE.

WE were old and tried friends, Reginald Vane and I. In our childhood we were neighbours and playfellows, in our boyhood we were schoolfellows, and in manhood we embraced the same profession in life, that of an engineer, and we both became pupils in the same Works. Evenly and pleasantly our lives had run on together, and the old stories of Jonathan and David, Damon and Pythias, were our own. Ay, very pleasantly, very evenly, till—alas ! that I should have to tell it, I, who was to blame—till that sweet-bitter summer when the gulf began to yawn between us.

It was very hot that year at Hastings, and the place was crowded with visitors. Everyone wore the lightest and airiest of fabrics, and a perpetual hot sheen lay over the landscape. Light and warmth, those delightful elements, were visible everywhere. Wearing the loveliest and coolest of materials, adorning them and adorned by them, was Helen Winter. Beautiful Helen ! dark-eyed, fair-haired Helen ! A Helen for whom many a Paris languished.

We—Reginald and I—met her for the first time on the same evening. It was at a ball. We both danced with her, both talked of her going home, both dreamed of her at night, and both looked eagerly for her next morning on the beach. We soon found our divinity. She was attired in a flowing white dress, and wore a coquettish sailor's hat, whose blue ribbons mingled with the long, fair hair, that was still wet from the morning's bathe. We thought her more beautiful than the night before, as we stood by, watching her vain endeavours to coax a sulky little Skye terrier into the water.

As the sun fell westward, and the band was playing on the Esplanade, we met her again in a costume of mauve and white ; and again she looked more beautiful in our eyes.

Thus day by day we met, and grew more intimate ; and soon it was a rare thing to see Helen Winter and her invalid mother without one of us, and generally both, in attendance. But when we had taken them home, and were alone again, a constraint had fallen upon us ; we had a secret from each other. Jealousy, that green-eyed monster, had taken up his abode in our hearts, and was poisoning the source of our life-long friendship. We, who had passed unscathed through the fire of school emulations, who had sworn eternal fellowship, whose aim had ever been to help one another on, we now stood apart, moody and silent when alone, and when with others, eager to show up our little failings in a bad light.

At last, things came to a climax.

It was a glorious, sunshiny morning, and we were all three seated on the beach, leaning idly on our elbows, and watching the ebb and flow of the waves as they leaped up merrily and then fell back in showers of spray. A few fishing-boats were out at sea, the beach was crowded with idlers like ourselves, children were digging and building in the sand, and at a little distance a nigger band was performing with more energy than skill.

"Dear me," cried Helen, breaking a long, happy, dreamy silence; "how the sun burns down! And my back aches for want of something to lean against."

"You have but to express a wish, Miss Winter, and it is done. I will get you something in a trice."

"How can you?"

"So," I said; and I began to dig my own and Reginald's stick down into the beach till it had taken a firm hold; then I laid a shawl upon it. "Now, Miss Winter, lean back."

"Will it bear me?"

"Yes; you are not very heavy, I should say."

She leant back, but only for a few moments; my device failed, and the sticks fell back to earth.

Reginald laughed contemptuously.

"Shingle is as weak a foundation as sand, Harry," he said.

Nevertheless, I tried again, with the aid of a book or two; but at last, after repeated failures, I had to give it up.

"Never mind, Mr. Foster," said Helen, laughing, as she rested once more on her elbow, while Reginald rose and walked away, humming a tune. He reappeared shortly, carrying a beach camp-stool. It had a flat seat, and a back that opened out and formed a firm support; a clever little invention that may daily be seen among sea-side loungers.

"Try my device, Miss Winter," said Reginald, "since Harry's only succeeded in upsetting you."

"How charming," she exclaimed, "the very thing I longed to have. Where did you get it?"

"Will you deign to accept it, Miss Winter?"

"What! Is it a present for me? Oh, thank you very much, but really, I—"

"Pray accept it, and when you seek its friendly support you will not refuse to read the lesson I would teach you by it."

"What lesson?" she asked; but the light in his eyes abashed her. "But indeed I thank you very much for it," she went on.

"Poor me!" I sighed.

"Nay, Mr. Foster, don't look so miserable," she said; "from you I will take the will for the deed; you know, the will is always half the

battle, is it not? And now I must go and see that dear mother of mine, or she will obstinately refuse her ordained egg and wine."

"Shall you return here?" we both asked at once.

"Perhaps—I cannot say." And in a moment she had passed from us.

"What a confounded fool you were to buy that stool, Reggie!" I said.

"You are polite," he replied, coldly. "And pray, why was I a fool?"

"It looks so—so—spooney."

"I don't care what it looks. Come, let us go and bathe; it's so hot, and the tide is well in now. Come along."

"Very well," I answered, and we strolled towards the machines.

But as we went I could not control my jealous temper.

"I suppose you are in love with that girl, Reg?"

"I am, Harry, and so are you?"

"Much you think of *me* in the matter. However, you needn't flatter yourself she cares a straw for you!"

"How do you know?"

"That's my affair; I do know it, and that's enough."

"Harry," he said, stopping at the door of his machine, and laying his hand on my arm, he looked at me with his honest brown eyes; "let us have a clear understanding and fair-play. We have been as brothers, we have never yet spoken an angry word or had a thought at variance, and now we stand apart, estranged and jealous; and why?—because we both love Helen Winter. Harry, she can only love one of us; perhaps she will not love either. Let us be fair about it. Let us each honestly try to win her without intriguing against the other. If you *know* she loves you, and not me, tell me so, and I will go. If not, be generous, and whichever of us wins her, may she be fairly won. Do not let our friendship be destroyed. Tell me, Harry, were you in earnest when you said just now she did not love me?"

"Find out for yourself. You cannot love her as I do, or you would not speak so coolly. I'm going to bathe; I'm sick of you and your fair-play," I said, savagely, as I shook off his arm and sprang into the machine, slamming the door behind me.

I undressed rapidly, my heart a prey to evil passions as I plunged into the deep blue sea. At a little distance from me I saw Reggie's brown head among the waves. We were both good swimmers, and were soon far out beyond our depth. I had turned on my back, and was gazing up to the sky, thinking of my darling, beautiful Helen! Oh, why had Vane come to me? I might have won her had he been away! As it was, my inmost heart told me that she half-preferred him; or why else had her eyes sparkled and her cheeks flushed when he gave her that stool? Confound him for thinking of it! I was lashing myself up into a fury when I heard a cry near. "Help, Harry, help! for heaven's sake! I'm cramped!"

I turned over and raised my head, and saw him a few yards ahead, struggling for very life. The devil rose up in me, and prompted a horrible thought. Why save him? Why appear to hear him? No one was in the water, no boat near, the noisy band ashore would prevent his cry being heard. I had only to dive and swim back. No action needed, no murder committed; only to swim away. He had been very warm when he went to bathe, and besides, was subject to cramp. Once before I had saved him, in our happy school-days. All this passed through my mind with lightning rapidity, and then my better self conquered the evil thought. I made hasty strokes towards him. As I did so I caught sight of Helen's white dress on the shore. The prize so nearly within my grasp, once more came the tempter. I reached his side; he had sunk and risen, and I caught and held him up.

"Save me, Harry!" he gasped; and I grasped him with a vice-like hold.

"Vane," I hissed, through my clenched teeth, "hear me, I have only to shake you off and you are a dead man and *she* is mine. But I will give you a chance of life. Give her up. Resign the contest. Swear it, quick, or I let you go."

Poor fellow, his eyes grew terrible in their anguish and despair. It was but a moment's struggle, then. "I give her up," he moaned. "Save me, Harry."

"Swear it."

"I swear it."

A few more moments and I placed him on the steps of his machine. I dressed in feverish haste, but he had been quicker, and as I quitted the car he stood waiting before it.

"You have saved my life, Harry Foster," he said, "and I thank you. But you have taken a cruelly unfair advantage of me. Still I keep to my bargain. Within an hour I leave this place. Win Helen Winter's love if you can, and may God forgive you. Oh, Helen! oh, my darling!" And with a sob that shook his frame, he rushed off, leaving me standing alone on the beach, shame-stricken and branded with the curse of Cain.

I did not see him again: when I reached the hotel he had gone.

Later in the day I joined Helen on the Parade. She soon enquired after Reginald.

"He's gone to town," I stammered, "at least I believe so; I think so."

She gave me a swift look of enquiry. "You have not quarrelled?"

"Quarrelled! Oh, no."

"He—he is not ill?" Her voice had a quiver in it—her eyes a wistfulness that roused the demon of jealousy within me.

"Ill? Oh, dear no. If you will promise not to tell, it's a love-affair that calls him away."

Ah! how truly does Tennyson say:

"That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies."

"I did not know you took such an interest in Reginald," I said, maliciously.

"I only take the interest one's acquaintances have a right to claim," she replied, and we were soon conversing on other topics.

Yet ever and anon there was a sad look in her eyes, and a dreaminess in her replies, which told that her thoughts were far away. Her cheeks, too, had paled, and her conversation was less brilliant than usual. Could it be she loved him, and I had bartered my peace of mind for a mess of pottage? Lost my friend's esteem for ever, only to meet with rejection? Verily the Hesperides' apples I had thought to pluck seemed to be only Dead Sea fruit, and were already turning to ashes in my mouth! Still I did not abate my attentions, and ere I left Hastings, I had nearly secured my prize. My assiduity, the greatness of my love, her mother's approval of me and my position, and her earnest wish to see Helen settled in life ere her own swiftly approaching death, all pleaded for me; and—but that I did not know till years after—pique, and wounded pride at Reggie's sudden desertion, and (as I made her believe) attachment elsewhere, all this, combined, worked on her mind. I felt my hour of triumph was at hand, though I dared not yet risk my fate on the one great question.

I was just then recalled to town by press of work, but this only interposed a short check to our intercourse, for the Winters returned a fortnight later, and I soon received an invitation from Mrs. Winter to come and dine with them.

The first person I had seen on resuming my duties at the office was Vane. He looked weary and pallid, and was writing away mechanically,

"How do, every one?" I said as I entered, to avoid any more particular greeting,—then I moved to my place, which was beside Reginald.

He raised his eyes and looked at me. A long, long look it was, a look that through all these years has never been effaced from my mind, a look full of sorrowful upbraiding, pain, and wistful enquiry. No bitter reproaches, no angry storm of words could have cut me to the heart so much as did that mute appeal. My eyes fell beneath it, and my cheeks burned as I took my seat, trying to appear unconscious.

"Well, Foster," cried a fellow, "can you give us poor slaves a more alluring sketch of Hastings than Vane there? According to him he saw 'nothing,' did 'nothing,' said 'nothing.' His life seems to have been a perfect blank, while we were envying him till we were fit to cry at being cooped up in this hot place."

"I don't know that I have much more to say than Vane," I replied, "except that there was a regatta yesterday, and a slower affair I never saw."

"Lots of folk, I suppose?"

" Oh, lots."

" Any pretty girls?"

" Plenty, and to spare."

" Fallen in love with one of them, eh?"

" Shouldn't tell you if I had."

" I lay two to one you have. You have a spooney air, and Vane there looks as if he had been crossed in love."

We did not speak that day, but by degrees, and through the exigencies of our life, the first constraint wore off. We conversed occasionally, but our pleasant brotherly intercourse was at end, and henceforth our hearts were as sealed books. Never did we allude by the merest word to the Winters, or to that last sad day at Hastings.

Meantime my suit prospered. Mrs. Winter was rapidly failing, but I had won, not only her consent, but her warm partisanship, and she urged on Helen to accept me.

One summer evening, when the tender twilight lit up her lovely hair, I pressed her for a reply to my oft-repeated question. She laid her hand in mine.

" As you will, Harry," she said. " I ought to love you, and I will try and do so, if you will give me time."

And thus calmly we were engaged, and I was happy, radiant, transported with my joy.

A few days after I met Reginald Vane in the street. He stopped me.

" Foster, you have won her, I hear. I am going away, somewhere abroad, I don't know, and don't care, where. I have kept my vow. Will you shake hands now, just once more, and for the last time? I wish to be able to say, God bless—— Oh, Harry, I cannot!" And in a second he had turned from me and was lost in the crowd.

" Reggie," I cried, " Reggie, stop, for heaven's sake, stop! Come back, Reggie, and hear me."

But he was gone, lost in the thick of a London crowd, and I saw him no more.

Once again I had to fight a fierce battle with my conscience ere I could regain my former composure, and even then I could not wholly quiet its upbraidings.

A week later I was calling with Helen on some mutual friends.

One of them turned to me and said, " I saw a friend of yours yesterday, Mr. Foster."

" Who?" I asked.

" Reginald Vane. He's going abroad for good. I am so sorry; we shall all miss him much, though lately he has been quite dull and depressed."

" Going abroad," said Helen; " I thought he was going to be married?"

" Oh, dear no! The last thing he is thinking of. I don't think he

will ever marry ; I fancy he has been disappointed, somehow. Don't you know, Mr. Foster : you who are like his brother ? Do tell us all about it ! "

" I really don't know. I—I—I haven't seen much of him lately," I said, awkwardly.

" Have you not ! I spoke of your engagement, and he seemed to know of it. Are you acquainted with him, Miss Winter ? "

" Yes ; I met both him and Mr. Foster at the same time."

" There, now ! " cried the girl ; " I said so. I am sure he must have been jealous of you, Mr. Foster, for I asked him if he had ever seen Miss Winter, and he only turned very pale and said nothing, and then he changed the topic of conversation. But there, I must not run on so, or you will think me quite a gossip."

Think her a gossip ! In very truth I did, and I wished her tattling tongue anywhere out of my own and Helen's hearing. We took leave soon after this, and instinctively walked along in silence. An indescribable constraint had fallen upon us. Helen walked quickly, her lips pressed firmly together ; I had never seen so dangerous a look on her face.

At last she broke the silence, which had grown oppressive.

" Why did you tell me Mr. Vane was going to be married ? " she asked ; and she turned and faced me as she spoke.

" I don't think I ever said so."

" You led me to think so, at any rate."

Once more there was a pause, and again she was the first to break it.

" Harry," she said, " there has been a quarrel between you and Mr. Vane. Tell me the cause ? "

" No, Helen, I cannot. Besides, it would not interest you."

She said no more, but the little hold I had upon her was gone, had vanished from that moment.

Day by day she grew quieter and sadder, all her life and brilliancy seemed dying away. I could hardly recognize in her the merry, fascinating Helen of those sea-side days. It nearly broke my heart. But the grief did me good. My better spirit conquered the evil one and gained the upper hand once more, and I determined, if it were for her happiness, to give her up. Need I say the resolution cost me much. But my conscience was keenly alive once more, and hourly Reggie's drowning eyes and long sorrowful look rose before me, and would leave me no rest. The curse of Cain was upon me.

" He that hateth his brother is a murderer," and these fearful words pursued me ; I was realizing their bitter truth.

I could bear it no longer. To see my darling fading away from me thus : sad, gentle, uncomplaining, indifferent, and the worm of remorse gnawing at my own heart ! It was too much for me.

One day I seized Helen's hand in mine.

"Nelly," I cried, "for pity's sake, tell me, did you ever love Reginald Vane?"

"I did—once!" she sobbed.

"Do you now? Answer truly, I pray."

"I am striving not. You promised to be patient with me, Harry."

"Why did you try not to love him?"

"Because—because—oh, Harry! why do you question me so cruelly?"

"Because—tell me, Helen. I must and will know."

"Because I thought he had deceived me."

She broke down, and a storm of passionate sobs shook her frame. Then I told her all: the whole, plain, unvarnished truth. She heard me in amazed silence.

"And now, Helen," I said, as my recital came to an end, "I return your troth; you are free. As for me, I will never rest till I bring him back to you, and thus make tardy reparation as I best can. Only, Helen, let me leave you with some comfort; say you forgive me. I have loved you—I do love you, I dare not say how much. Forgive me."

She forgave me, and we parted.

The sun was setting at Lake Constance when I came upon him. He was lying in the grass, idly playing with the weeds, his eye roaming over the water's fair expanse.

"Reggie, Reggie, my own old friend! I am come to seek pardon for my crime. She knows all, Reggie, and is waiting to welcome you home. Friend of my childhood, forgive me!"

With a mighty bound he sprang up and seized my hand. Even now, though it is many years ago, I cannot dwell upon that sad and solemn renewal of our estranged brotherhood. Need I say more? Need I tell how I brought him to her, and how they both forgave and comforted me?

Enough that ever since they have been united they have unwearingly sought my friendship, and strived by word and deed to heal the wound in my heart. And now, after so many years have passed, and age has silvered both our heads, our hands still clasp with the ancient cordial grasp, and I know that the sad crime of my youth is forgiven me; and I have found peace within their joy.

THE POWER OF SILENCE.

ILLUSTRATED BY "*L'Homme qui Rit.*"

THAT "speech is silvern, but silence golden," is a saying which, recommended by its elegance, has become proverbial on account of its close-packed meaning. But it shares with most proverbs the drawback of possessing only half a truth. We all know many instances in which speech is obviously the gold, and silence less than silver. We all know the man—perhaps even the woman—who is incapable of learning the value of "a word spoken in season;" who, with the best intentions, always loses the effective moment for praise, rebuke, encouragement, consolation. Have we not often missed such opportunities ourselves, and afterwards long and vainly desired them again?

Nevertheless, the half truth of our proverb is very good, so far as it goes. The object of the present paper is to point out its excellence as a rule, in the composition of works of fiction.

As a sudden pause or rest in music will sometimes give more effect than the most elaborate cadenza, so in many points of a narrative, the absence of comment contributes a force which would be destroyed by a touch. In fact, what is wanted to give reality and graphic energy to a story, is an entire suspension of the author's *ego*. The author makes himself sufficiently known by his selection of plot and characters. Beyond that, the most complete self-withdrawal will best serve his turn. Witness all our greatest novels, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *Emma*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Esmond*, *The Barsetshire Chronicles*, and *Silas Marner*. Mixtures of essay and story are invariably failures; not, indeed, that they always fail to interest. Such books as George Macdonald's are eagerly received by many. But as works of art they are nondescript, defective; "neither flesh, fowl, nor good red herring," according to our homely, telling saw.

If these views are correct, it must then be admitted that England has the pre-eminence in producing works of fiction. It would be hard to match the novels mentioned above in any foreign language. France would probably take the palm to herself in this as in most points, with the same calm arrogance which makes one of her great modern chemists begin his book by the words: "Chemistry is a French science." And, disputing our theory, France would have a right to contest superiority in novel-writing. There is in French novels a gigantic breadth of plot, a *oneness* of design, which is little studied among our insular writers. Character and detail are with us made pre-eminent;

that which is natural, that which we see every day, is with us most desired in fiction. We seek ourselves in our novels.

The Frenchman, on the other hand, revels in astounding scenes, in startling contrasts, and a coincidence on every other page. If the heroine faints under a complication of imminent horrors in some terrible Alpine castle, one may argue with perfect confidence that it will be her lover, whom we last saw quietly in Paris, who will rush in to catch her in his arms and defeat her foes. How he came there may perhaps be explained in three ensuing chapters, with long and solemn remarks on the probability of such an occurrence. A Frenchman is fond of remarks and soliloquies. One strong characteristic forbids them to a genuine Englishman—namely, the dread of being laughed at. The Frenchman, intensely conscious of the importance of his *ego*, "*Moi qui vous parle*," never dreams that any one can laugh at what he has to say. If any person shows such ill-breeding, there are fiery little spirits of indignation always ready—it is a dishonour fit to be "washed out in blood," as people say. The Englishman, in like circumstances, feels that the fault is his own: "It serves me right; I made a fool of myself."

Now, of these two orders of mind, it may be judged, without national partiality, that the more reticent is the more powerful. Not only in pictorial effect, but even in the portrayal of the writer's own character. The reader gleans it for himself, and is more forcibly impressed than if all had been laid out before him. Maurice has said this as well as it can be said, in his late work on casuistry:—"There is in the English character something which shrinks from these forms of egotism, even whilst it gives them entertainment. The silent, self-contained man, who avoids such exhibitions, commands our respect; we have a certain dislike—even contempt—for the man who relieves himself by whispering his confessions into the ear of the public, though we are not unwilling to use our privilege of listening. The reserve of such writers as Butler often tells more of their characters than any discovery which they could make respecting their history. They hide under language which concerns the world, many a struggle which they have gone through in themselves; slowly we become as much convinced that a man is speaking to us in these books, as if he admitted us into his closest privacy. If such reticence were lost from our literature, we should lose much that is most precious in it, much that has been *ultimately very powerful*."* It would be unfair to infer that Frenchmen alone are marked by this want of reticence, which, nevertheless, is characteristic in their nation. The same peculiarity is obvious in many writers of other nations. Lytton has a certain majestic gravity which prevents his seeing that his heroes and heroines are often ludicrous, and walk on stilts; as, for instance, his mysterious Guy Darrell, who would have been much more interesting than he really is,

* The Rev. F. D. Maurice on *The Conscience*.

if he could have ever condescended to act like a sane and commonplace person. Disraeli, again, has a fatal power of talk, which (*exempli gratiâ*) makes him give several paragraphs to the weighty reasons which induced Coningsby at last to say—"Good day, grandfather."

In the two English novelists above-named, this effect apparently arises from exactly the same cause which acts in French writers, for with their loquacity they have also the merits of French novelists: their plots are united and broad, more than those of almost any other of our writers.

Nothing can better illustrate these observations than a consideration of Victor Hugo's last work, *L'Homme qui Rit*. It is a problem, a *lusus non naturæ sed artis*. It is as though one should see a building, vast, majestic, harmonious in proportion, and, on approaching, should find each detail to be exaggerated, grotesque, or misplaced. An Englishman reading this book (which treats of England) finds it to be full of extravagances and ludicrous mistakes. Yet, at the close, he is overpowered by the skill with which the artist draws together in one knot the many threads which have run through the story. It has a roundness with which nothing English, except *Silas Marner*, can bear comparison, and it is on a much wider scale than *Silas Marner*. To do justice to *L'Homme qui Rit*, the plot should be detailed. It is supposed to be the vehicle for certain political opinions, but, on all accounts, these are best thrown on one side.

The story runs thus:—

There existed in England, before the time of William III., a mixed race of persons, apparently somewhat resembling gipsies, and called *comprachicos*, from Basque words, meaning "child-buyers." These wretches bought or stole little children, with the object of making them, by means of mutilation, monstrosities whom people would pay money to see. In the time of William and Mary this horrible traffic was made penal, and the comprachicos banished, on pain of the severest punishment. A certain ship-load of them embarked one stormy winter's night, from the southern coast of the Isle of Portland. They were in great haste and fear. A little child helped them in their preparations. A storm was brewing, but they dared not wait. The boat left the shore, but a small, dark object remained motionless on the beach; they had—forgotten? the child!

It was a boy, a brave little fellow; for, having reviewed his miserable circumstances, he set himself to climb the precipice above his head—did it, and then traversed the whole of that dreary, homeless, snow-covered island, in the night, and alone.

Suddenly he sees something on a hillock, something which he thinks is a man who can befriend him. It is a corpse upon a gallows; some poor smuggler left there as a warning, and periodically tarred to keep the body from falling asunder. As the child stands there, a flock of

crows come to make their horrible meal. A sudden qualm of nameless terror seizes the wandering child; he is saved from being frozen to death by the fear which makes him rush wildly from the spot.

He plods on, and presently hears a faint cry. He distinguishes nothing but a slight elevation in the snow, long and narrow, like a grave. A woman lies there, covered by the drift. She is dead and cold, but in her arms is a little wailing girl. The boy takes the child, a mere baby: wraps it in his own coat, and labours on with this new burden.

At last he has crossed the Chesil Beach,* and is in Weymouth, but in Weymouth fast asleep. Not a door will open to the weary little lad, till he comes upon a sort of box on wheels, whence shines a gleam of light. Hideous growls and a rough voice answer his application for shelter, but at length he is received within, and, once in, most kindly tended. This *cahute*, as it is called, belongs to an old "philosopher," formerly tutor to that mystic thing, a lord, and who, disgusted with the aristocracy, has taken up his abode in this primitive kind of cab, with a wolf for a companion. The wolf he calls *Homo*; himself, *Ursus*. This personage (who has no character and no qualities but a kind of growling good-nature) is the democratic element of the story. It is his business to speak severely upon the fertile topic of "the lord," whenever occasion serves; and he does his work willingly, with apparently but one stipulation, viz., that he shall be required to limit no remark upon government to less than three pages.

Ursus shelters the two children in his little hut. The boy has an eternal laugh; an infectious laugh; a laugh from ear to ear, carved by the comprachicos. The girl is blind.

This deformed boy, *Gwynplaine*, the *Laughing Man* who gives his name to the book, is (though it is not disclosed thus early in the story), the legitimate son of Lord Linnæus Clancharlie, who, refusing to give up certain republican opinions on the Restoration, yielded his estates to confiscation and henceforth lived abroad, where, at last, he died. The existence of the little lord was not generally known; but it *was known* to King James II., who, for reasons of his own, delivered up the child to the comprachicos, paying them a sum of money to disfigure him beyond recognition. Lord Clancharlie's supposed illegitimate son, Lord David Dirrymoir, will, however, be allowed to retain great part of the paternal estates by means of marrying James II.'s natural daughter, the Duchess Josiane, a splendid specimen of voluptuous womanhood, who has been dowered with the confiscated property. They remain contentedly affianced, each preferring freedom.

The Duchess has an enemy, one Barkilphedro, a man on whom she has bestowed favours, and who at last obtains a post which gives him

* "The Chess Hill," says Hugo, with a correctness which reminds one of the Scotchman's "Bug pipe," so often mentioned in *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*.

the appointment of opening all bottles found floating on the sea, and of carrying their contents to head-quarters. Now we begin to see how matters are working round, for, early in the book, we had an immensely long description of the wreck of that boat which we saw leaving Portland, and of a document drawn up by the crew and committed to the waves, as a final confession of some crime lying heavy on their conscience.

Years pass. Gwynplaine is a man: his laugh is irresistible. Ursus composes a dreary drama, called, "Chaos Vanquished," in which he, the wolf, the blind girl named Dea, Gwynplaine, and two women-servants* are the *dramatis personæ*. It is a great success. The theatre (which is the courtyard of an inn) is so full that it empties the churches, insomuch that the pastors of the five parishes of Southwark appeal to the Bishop of London, who appeals to Her Majesty Queen Anne.† A little box there has been set apart for "nobility," but has remained empty, until one night a blaze of beauty fills it, a splendid bejewelled creature, attended only by her page; a being who fills Gwynplaine's soul with a new idea of womanhood far other than that inspired by the tender, spiritual Dea. It is the Duchess Josiane, come to be *désenmuyée*, a process which even a prize-fight could not perform for her. The result is successful. Some days later, her page delivers to Gwynplaine a declaration of love from the glorious Duchess! He, the monster, the low-born actor, is beloved by her! It raises a tumult in his soul. But Dea conquers; he resolves against the Duchess.

Suddenly, as he is sitting at breakfast, Dea "gracefully blowing her tea," and indulging in a little love-scene, he is arrested. And here is a very striking passage. The personage who walks into the Green Box for this purpose is a wapentake (of course we all know what this means. M. Hugo knows all about it). He carries in his hand a mystic staff, known as the Iron Weapon. He is apparently followed by a vast multitude of policemen, and at a sign from him, Gwynplaine (urged on by Ursus, who knows the vanity of resistance, and is cowed at once by the Iron Weapon), arises and follows the wapentake to a prison. Here he is confronted by a prisoner on the rack, the one saved of those comprachicos who had disfigured him. He is recognized by his deformity. All is avowed. Barkilphedro (who is present) informs him that he is Lord Fermain Clancharlie. Gwynplaine immediately faints, and before he returns to himself, Barkilphedro has found time to transport him to the Duchess Josiane's (now his own) palace at Windsor, and to attire him in a silken suit.

Queen Anne, who, with a little feminine spite, has no objection to see her handsome half-sister united to a monster, is persuaded by the

* "One Phœbe and the other Venus. Read *Fibi* and *Vinos*, because it is proper to adapt oneself to the English pronunciation."—*L'Homme qui Rit*, ii. 270.

† *L'Homme qui Rit*, iii. 43.

omnipotent Barkilphedro to command the marriage of the Duchess with the new lord ; no one has presence of mind to object ; Gwynplaine is to be installed in his seat in the House of Lords on the same night on which Ursus with his troop is ordered, under severe penalties, to quit England for ever.

Here ensues a really fine scene. True, there is some singular description, in consequence of M. Hugo's desire to instruct the French people concerning the political habits of their neighbours ; but on the whole, Gwynplaine's first and last speech is a grand and powerful one—if he had but omitted three-fourths of it. He opens out to the Lords a state of society which was known to him, but of which they were utterly ignorant. He implores them to legislate for the wretches of whom he had been one. And then his face, which an immense effort had restrained, shot back to its accustomed grin, and the whole house burst into a peal of laughter.

Gwynplaine flings off his lordly trappings, betakes himself in his despair (as men usually do in novels,) to one of the bridges, and by one of those coincidences so frequent in real life, finds the wolf Homo licking his hand, and is led by him to the vessel on which his old friend, with Dea, is embarking.

It would not be fair to detail the close. It is enough to say that it is worthy of a French novel.

Now one sees at once that this is a bold, well-contrived plot, abounding in picturesque "situations." It is original also. Such a character as Gwynplaine—or rather, a person so circumstanced—has never yet existed in the world of fiction. If the author did but possess the art of knowing when to leave off, the reading world could have hailed the birth of a really fine book. But alas ! he has not this art, and every detail is exaggerated and dulled. Ursus, the philosopher, to begin with, is intolerable. He is mainly responsible for the prolongation of the work into a fourth volume. For the third, the author's soliloquies must answer. There is actually matter for two. And then the soliloquies are so tiresome. Imagine page after page, just as one enters upon the story, written in this style :—

"The loquacity of the night is not less lugubrious than its silence. One feels in it the anger of the Unknown.

"The night is a presence. Whose presence ? Moreover, one must distinguish between the night and the shadows. The absolute is in the night ; the manifold is in the shadows," &c. Pages of such reflections occur throughout the otherwise powerful description of the malefactor on his gibbet. Compare this with the marvellous narrative of the willow-wand and of the father's death in *Adam Bede*.

The book abounds in reflections to such an extent, that the very coincidences cannot be left to take care of themselves. A thousand moral remarks dull the edge of each ; as for instance, when Gwynplaine

awakens in his new palace, in the midst of splendour suggestive rather of ancient Bagdad than of Windsor, we are compelled, before learning what becomes of him there, to wade through or to skip a sort of essay beginning, "*L'extraordinaire c'est une obscurité*," and which goes on to dilate upon "the Smile of Fatality—can one imagine anything more terrible," &c. The Smile of Fatality would be of itself a joke to a good English writer; but the Frenchman sees in it something mysterious and grand.

The part in which the loss of power resulting from too many words is felt more than in any other, is that of depicting a love-scene. "They are not easily forgiven who lay open the marriage-chambers of the heart," and there is a coarseness in too minute description of love-scenes, and also a great weakness. The details are generally petty, and often ridiculous; that which they cover is strong, and pure, and fervent; but so much, and only so much, ought to be said about it as shall serve to raise an image of the feeling in the reader's breast.

To take one final instance of the value of knowing when to leave off, let us turn to a kindred spirit of England—to the child-loving, child-hearted Dane. You know Andersen's beautiful story of the bell which sounded now and again from the woodland depths, and which men went a-seeking for a holiday jaunt, but none of them found it so. At last, after a confirmation in the village, a prince and a peasant, with many others, resolved to discover the bell which drew them by its deep, sweet, far-off music. One by one the rest dropped off, but these two toiled on. The road parted at last, the poor boy gave the prince his choice, and took the other path, and at length, when "the air was as glowing red as fire, and the forest was as silent as silent could be," the king's son scaled a rock that lay across his path, and "how grand a sight was there! The sea, the boundless, magnificent sea, rolling its broad waves to the shore, lay spread out before him, while the sun stood like a fiery altar just at the point where the sea and sky met, and all around had melted into one glorious tint. The forest was singing, and the sea was singing, and his heart joined their hymns of praise.

* * * * *

"Just at that moment, the poor boy, with the short sleeves and the wooden shoes, emerged from the right-hand road; he, too, had come just in time, having reached the same point by another way. And they ran to meet each other, and stood hand-in-hand in the vast church of nature and poetry. And above them sounded the invisible solemn bell, while holy spirits floated around them, singing a joyous hallelujah.'

Not a syllable more. One word of explanation would have spoiled the whole.